

Artists' Moving Image in Scotland: Production, Circulation, Reception, 1970–2021

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
December 2021

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Funded by:

SCOTTISH GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR ARTS & HUMANITIES
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Declaration

I, Marcus Jack, declare that the enclosed submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and consisting of a thesis meets the regulations stated in the handbook for the mode of submission selected and approved by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee.

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Abstract

Between the discrete artistic disciplines, academic fields and infrastructures of filmmaking and visual art, *artists' moving image* has long occupied an interstitial and often-overlooked position. Amongst existing scholarship on the intersection of art and film in the United Kingdom, Scotland as a cultural context produced by the devolution of arts governance has suffered another kind of negligence through deference to London-centric narratives. These compound marginalisations have, I argue, led to a fragmentary awareness of the development of this hybrid artform within the country. This new body of research aims to consolidate and present, for the first time, a comprehensive survey of artists' moving image and its antecedent forms of experimental, avant-garde and artists' film and video practices within the frame of Scotland's particular cultural, critical, political and economic infrastructure.

Using a methodology derived from the social history of art, this research understands formal developments in art through their conditions of production, extending this theoretical basis to encompass the newer discipline of exhibitions history which places the art object within systems of distribution, presentation and reception, mediated via a network of custodians. To recover these historical narratives, it implements a twofold approach in the use of wide-ranging archival materials and in the creation of a new dataset of fourteen oral history interviews. Drawing from these primary sources, it maps a complex lineage of overlapping communities within which artists and organisers have fostered productive conditions, against the odds, for the development of a vibrant non-commercial film and video practice.

In providing an extensive catalogue of artists, filmmakers, organisers and key moments, this research contributes a robust foundation for future enquiry. In plotting new narratives and their sources, it advances upon existing scholarship on artists' moving image in the UK, asking to whom the available categories and theories of moving image really belong. Through its close analysis of cultural policy, networks, exhibitions and other forms of infrastructure, it also provides an evaluation of the efficacy of historic and contemporary approaches to the collecting, commissioning and supporting of artists' moving image. Adversity notwithstanding, it finds within the Scottish context a diverse and remarkable array of work, deserving of critical attention and renewed affection.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would simply not exist without the unerring support, feedback and direction of my supervisory team Professor Sarah Smith, Dr Sarah Neely, Kitty Anderson and her predecessor Nicole Yip. For their rigour and advocacy, deepest gratitude goes to my examiners Professor Susannah Thompson and Professor Craig Richardson. Thanks also to Dr Ben Greenman, Dr Ross Birrell, Professor Johnny Rodger and Dr Elizabeth Hodson who have, at the right moment, challenged and helped refine my approach.

For offering many hours to the oral history process and with the greatest admiration for their passion and dedication to the promotion of artists' moving image in Scotland, thanks to my interview participants Sam Ainsley, Malcolm Dickson, Charles Esche, Barry Esson and Bryony McIntyre, Luke Fowler, Lesley Keen, Kim Knowles, Mason Leaver-Yap, Lucy McKenzie, Stephanie Smith, Gillian Steel, Alia Syed, Sarah Tripp and Ann Vance. For their generosity in sharing materials, memories and expertise, thanks also to Tiffany Boyle, Katie Bruce, Ben Cook, Karen Cunningham, Julie-Ann Delaney, Patricia Fleming, Alex Frost, Paula Larkin, Wendy Law, Matt Lloyd, Adam Lockhart, Lauren Logan, Kirstie Meehan, Lutz Mommartz, Paul Maguire, Mandy McIntosh, Stephen Palmer, Michael Tooby, the staff of Cove Park, GSA Archives and the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive.

This research would not have been possible without the training and subsidy provided by the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities. Outputs and events developed throughout this journey were additionally supported by Alchemy Film & Arts, The Glasgow School of Art, Tate and the Paul Mellon Centre.

Parts of this research have been presented as conference papers *Towards an exhibitionary history of artists' moving image in Scotland since the 1990s*, Screen Studies Conference, University of Glasgow, June 2019; *"We never ever paid an electricity bill": A DIY history of artists' moving image exhibition in Scotland*, Encounters Symposium, University of Dundee, February 2020; *Films on Art: artistic innovation and the art-film dilemma in 1970s Scotland*, Association for Art History Annual Conference, April 2021; *Channel Crossing: artists' moving image from Scotland and the European network, 1986–1996*, Scotland in Europe – Cultural Connections, 1939 to the Present, National Galleries Scotland, February 2022; and *Peripherality and its consequences: the counternarratives of artists' filmmaking in Scotland (and elsewhere)*, Working Paper Series, Archive/Counter-Archive, York University, March 2022. Thank you to the convenors of each for expediting my thinking at crucial turns.

This thesis was written during the COVID-19 pandemic in solidarity with researchers in the UK and worldwide facing compound marginalisations. It was produced despite systemically inadequate working conditions, in no small part expedited by the privileges of whiteness, maleness, living without caring responsibilities, ill-health or financial insecurity, and endorses the UCU campaign to recognise doctoral researchers as staff. Thank you in particular to my family (and dogs), Owain, Katherine, Eilidh and Heather for their care, conversation and calm. This thesis is for the many artists and filmmakers unrecognised for their artistic achievements in their own lifetime.

You can best be truly international by being true to yourself and your own, we might be surprised at how far flung the interest turns out to be in films that are utterly Scottish, in outlook and in feel.

Margaret Tait (1988)

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Introduction

0.1 Aims

This thesis attempts to uncover and connect the formative narratives which detail the embrace of film and video media by artists in Scotland since 1970. Through primary archival and interview-based research, it develops the first holistic survey of the changing form, production, distribution, presentation and reception of an artform now ubiquitous within contemporary art systems and practiced by over 40% of artists in Scotland (Creative Scotland, 2016, p. 17). Addressing the remarkable absence of comprehensive critical attention, it reconstructs this history within an ever-evolving infrastructure of organisers, institutions, policies, economies, networks and technological paradigms, asking *what are the moments and actions which constitute a history of artists' moving image in Scotland? Where does this history reside? And, who are its custodians?*

The need for this research, for a document which serves a lacking collective memory, became apparent to me whilst advocating for the artform as a practising curator. In 2015 I founded Transit Arts as an itinerant platform for the exhibition of artists' moving image, working through public screening programmes and experimental publishing. Developed in partnership with galleries and festivals across Scotland, Transit Arts' work became increasingly research-oriented, presenting contemporary artistic production in close conversation with historical material sourced from libraries, archives and estates, both on-screen and in print. It was clear how little accessed, known or shown much of this material was and, amidst the torrent of ever-more screen-based production, how few promoters had adequate capacity for dedicated transhistorical research. This understanding was deepened by my work at LUX Scotland between 2017 and 2018. The first dedicated support agency for artists' moving image in Scotland and a centralising force therein, LUX Scotland brought me into regular contact with a range of extraordinary artists, organisers and researchers—many of whom appear in the following pages—who often expressed a desire to convene with historical forbearers but whose available resources, including LUX's renowned collection, were too often inscribed with an Anglified perspective, Scotland all but absent. Motivated by an increasingly troubled view of this gap, my pursuit of this specialised work felt necessary, timely, personal and political. Supported by an expanding network and longstanding academic interest in constructions of Scottish cultural identity, my position in so doing was advantageous.

A reconstruction distinguished from equivalent histories across constituent nations of the United Kingdom is necessitated, I contend, by a decades-long campaign of cultural devolution. In 1967 the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) was formed as an autonomous body by Royal Charter, redrawing the boundaries of arts governance and installing a discrete socio-economic context for artists in Scotland (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1967, p. 33). The establishment of a Scottish political self-image has since been enshrined by further devolutionary milestones: a failed devolution referendum in 1979; its successful repetition in 1997; the consequent formation of a Scottish parliament in 1999; and in the high-profile independence referendum of 2014. Despite the untenable prospect of a homogenous British cultural history, contrary to or unaffected by political divergence, existent accounts for the development of artists' moving image in the UK have largely been written with this view, inscribed with a London-centrism that flattens the dissent of alternative forms, taxonomies and counternarratives.¹ Without acknowledging the specific infrastructural means through which certain historic film and video movements were constituted, where pipelines between resource and aesthetic development are indisputable, such histories wrongly suppose shared conditions of production.² To its core excavation, this thesis advocates for a reconsideration of dominant narratives, asking *to whom do the available categories and theories of moving image really belong?*

When they do feature, meanwhile, artists in Scotland are often cast as anomalies untethered from a community. In his influential monograph, for instance, David Curtis (2007, p. 291) dubs the Orcadian filmmaker and poet Margaret Tait a 'true original,' where she might be more accurately situated in a close dialogue with the Italian neorealists of her schooling, or pitted against the strong documentary tradition in Scotland. Chapter One further negotiates existing literature on the field, identifying the few intersections between moving image scholarship and Scotland before articulating a theory of and strategy for historical recovery. It is necessary, I argue, to rehabilitate a history that is not always defined in relation to its southern sibling, that points both inwards and further outwards.

The longstanding and positive influence of artists and organisers from England in Scotland is nevertheless immutable. In the first years of the SAC, institutional deference to the radical

¹ See O'Pray (1996), Curtis (2007) or Rees (2011a).

² See section 2.5 on the role of the Arts Council of Great Britain Artists' Film Committee in constituting a *British Avant-Garde* in the 1970s or section 3.1.1 on the omission of Scottish voices from Channel 4's Workshop Declaration (1982).

work of the London Film-Makers Co-op (LFMC, 1966–1997) as a cypher for metropolitan counterculture, then London Video Arts (LVA, 1976–1997) which pioneered deconstructions of televisual media, heavily shaped the engagement artists in Scotland had with the media of film and video. These mythologies loom large in the first half of this chronology. Chapter Two: 1970–1979 and Chapter Three: 1980–1989 describe the transition from a spattering of projects, largely imported by a handful of omnivorous promoters—Richard Demarco, Tom McGrath, Tamara Krikorian, Lynda Myles—whilst production subsidy remained stubbornly beyond reach, to a consolidated scene of artist-run exhibition, workshops and publishing, highly motivated, politicised and internationally networked.

In its second half, Chapter Four: 1990–1999 and Chapter Five: 2000–2021 grapple with the similarly mythic narrative of Scottish triumphalism, the apotheosis of which was notoriously dubbed the *Glasgow Miracle* by curator Hans Ulrich Obrist. The simultaneous entry of contemporary art from Scotland and the moving image into the mainstream global discourse—and market—is conveniently encapsulated in Scottish videomaker Douglas Gordon’s receipt of the 1996 Turner Prize, and reaffirmed in the recent wins of Glasgow artists Duncan Campbell (2014) and Charlotte Prodger (2018). In the twenty-first century, a context for artists’ moving image is sustained by DIY exhibitors, festivals and specialist agencies like LUX Scotland (2014–) whilst the wholesale incorporation of the form into the contemporary art status quo is represented through major institutions’ regular programming and in the country’s flagship export, *Scotland + Venice* (2003–). Advancing from artist and political theorist Gregory Sholette’s articulation of a *creative dark matter* which underwrites art in the neoliberal era, these chapters examine the cultural policy, support mechanisms and invisible labour which fuel the consolidation of a supposedly thriving ecology.

Though this thesis is organised as a linear survey of provision, it does not contend that there exists a teleology, that influence is cumulative or progress is historically recognisable. Neither is it interested in distilling essentialist notions of Scottishness or stating a case for exceptionalism relating to nationhood. It endorses a view of Scotland as a loose and consciously permeable network which can contain those born, educated, living, or working here, but which may also be expanded to encompass the itinerant influence of those who have exhibited, screened or visited, acknowledging too the complex and contaminating influence of global development. This research also recognises the imprecision and ahistoricism of the

relative neologism *artists' moving image* and as such a full articulation of its remit, antecedents and value are provided.

To recover the actual events which comprise this nebulous national history, I derive a methodology from the *social history of art* and the adjacent field of *exhibitions history*. These ask how flows of power, be they political, economic, social or institutional, have both encouraged and inhibited the material conditions of artistic production. This approach is realised through a tripartite method beginning with a survey of existent academic literature and the present status of film and video work and documentation in Scottish collections, with analyses of their findings and gaps. To reconcile significant omissions, it then gathers primary material through archival research undertaken at repositories nationwide and via a network of personal holdings, and draws from a new dataset of fourteen oral history interviews conducted with artists, curators and educators variously involved in the promotion of the practice since the 1970s. It is my hope that this *aide-mémoire* finds utility in the promotion of a better resourced and known culture, that it provides myriad threads for gradual unpicking, offering a catalogue of inspiring, dissident and marginalised voices in moving image production, many having never previously been accorded the scholarly recognition they so deserve.

0.2 Defining *artists' moving image* in Scotland

The field of *artists' moving image* is a composite of discrete artistic and filmic practices each embedded with heterogeneous understandings of the work, its medium, philosophy, and movement through channels of production, distribution and consumption. The categories it amalgamates variously include: *avant-garde* and *experimental film*; *structuralist* or *Structural/Materialist film*; *expanded cinema*; *video art*; *film* or *video installation*; and *artists' film* or *video*. A work of *artists' moving image* might also be described as *televisual*, *cinematic*, or *filmic*, whilst it can share formal and conceptual concerns with wider time-based media, performance, sound art, new media and computer arts. Each term is attached to a range of institutional and historical contexts and, as film scholar Erika Balsom (2016, p. 15) contends, 'carves up the field of practice in a different way, articulating positions on medium, market, exhibition site, and cultural location in the process.' As curator Tanya Leighton (2008, p. 11) reminds us, however, categories are ultimately heuristic devices: 'their presumed boundaries are in fact permeable.' With this qualification, this thesis posits *artists' moving image* as a parameter that is wilfully slippery, irregular and open to contention. At times, this research allies more to one context—artistic, filmic—than the other, understanding these proximities as an ongoing negotiation, the very unresolvedness of which is perhaps the only immutable characteristic of the hundreds of works considered herein.

Artists' moving image is also a neologism. In 1991, producer John Wyver (1996, p. 318) used 'moving image culture' to describe a convergence of once-disparate film and video practices, evidencing an early desire for taxonomic consolidation. Balsom (2016, p. 16) attributes the popularisation of *artists' moving image* in the UK to the influence of LUX. The Lux Centre was founded via the merger of the LFMC and LVA in 1997 and relaunched as LUX in 2002 to become Europe's largest distributor of *artists' moving image*. Converging these organisational histories, *artists' moving image* has offered a productive means of reconciling distinct material claims. In UK publishing a preference for the term emerges concurrently (Leighton and Büchler, 2003; Curtis, 2007; Leighton, 2008; Elwes, 2015).

As curator Andrew Wilson (2011, p. 200) reminds us, however, 'histories are forever being revisited and most often recuperated in terms of particular present needs and preoccupations.' With this caveat, it is possible to view the amicable convergence of film and video that *artists' moving image* implies as ahistorical, and it has attracted criticism as such. Detractions cite its homogenisation of diverse historical contexts into a monocultural, readily

institutionalised narrative, described by Balsom (2016, p. 17) as a ‘violent levelling.’ Academic and videomaker Stephen Partridge (2006, p. 187) warns ‘the idea that the video projector has merged film and video into a new unified electronic cinema isn’t totally exact,’ adding that whilst ‘digital technologies provide a flexible platform for cultural practice where hybridisation, and the lack of distinctions between historic media do not matter, [...] ignorance of the process might, at least for the scholar.’ Where Leighton (2008, p. 11) uses *moving image*, she qualifies this with different concerns, questioning an imprecise logic, ‘since it implies that movement is located at the level of the (filmic or televisual) image,’ and finding it ‘all-too generic’ in that it detracts from the ‘specific, apparatusal analysis of the relations [...] between art and film.’

Recognising both the value of *artists’ moving image* as a shorthand for an unruly multitude of overlapping and conflicting practices and the pertinent issues of historical distortion it enacts, this research endeavours to articulate categories as they were understood in contemporaneous documentation, deriving its language from the actual communities which produced, promoted and critiqued moving image work. In order to further define the scope of this research, however, it is necessary to provide an overview of the evolving film- and art-historical antecedents which comprise this expanded practice.

Artists’ moving image has its first predecessor in *experimental* or *avant-garde* filmmaking, forms of practice distinguishable in the earliest cinema and broadly characterised by conscious divergence from the concerns of the industrial mainstream.³ Neither of these terms, however, are themselves free from contestation. Scott MacDonald (2012, p. 87) describes how ‘*avant-garde* and *experimental* have tended, almost by definition, to assist in the marginalization of the body of work to which these terms refer.’ This echoes the sentiment of film historian P. Adams Sitney (1979, p. vii) who was unsatisfied by the latter’s implication of a ‘tentative or secondary relationship to a more stable cinema.’ Where *experimental* implies deference to a refined centre, *avant-garde* might be over-attached to the progressivist doctrine signified in its literal, militaristic translation—*advance guard*. Writing in 1932, filmmaker Germaine Dulac (1978, p. 43) noted, ‘the avant-garde film does not appeal to the mere pleasure of the crowd. It is at once too egoistic and too altruistic. Egoistic, because it is the personal manifestation of pure thought; altruistic, because it is isolated from every

³ P. Adams Sitney (1979, p. vii) also notes the use of *film poems* to describe early non-industrial work in the American context.

concern other than progress.’ Dulac’s view foreshadows popular critique of the term that emerges in the late 1970s when, as artist Catherine Elwes (2015, p. 111) notes, moving image work ‘embraced Jacques Derrida’s critique of the unified subject, and aspired to an identity that was fluid, provisional, fragmented and impure.’ Marking this dissatisfaction, writer Michael O’Pray (1996, p. 2) settles on *avant-garde* provisionally, conceding that although it ‘will offend,’ the term ‘remained viable at least until the early 1980s at which point pluralism took hold.’ Useful long after its appendage to the plastic arts where avant-gardism ultimately displaced the most dominant forms of production, the avant-garde film, O’Pray (2003, p. 1) notes elsewhere, remained ‘marginal to the commercial cinema and art world alike.’

In ‘The Two Avant-Gardes’ (1975), filmmaker and theorist Peter Wollen observed the emergence of two distinct tribes within the avant-garde category in Europe, marked by different interpretations of purity and progress. He describes a fundamental opposition between filmmakers working within a fine art tradition and those instrumentalising the medium for radical political ends. Interested in testing the form and its processes, the former’s ideas emerge from conceptual art and painterly abstraction with its apotheosis in that which filmmaker Peter Gidal (1978) later theorised as *Structural/Materialist* film. The latter, meanwhile, is characterised by various cinephilic European New Wave movements, mobilised towards a Marxist conception of filmmaking particularly following the protests of 1968 (Wollen, 1975).

Critiques of Wollen’s schema contend that this doesn’t adequately reflect the porosity of the two modes; ambiguity is the very prerogative of the avant-garde, what O’Pray (1996, p. 3) calls being ‘fuzzy at the edges.’ For him, any taxonomy which primarily concerns film’s aesthetic registers fails to account for differences which are essentially social:

It is an awkward fact that all of these types of cinema—mainstream, art cinema and the avant-garde—lay claim to art. But these types of cinema are primarily categories of practice and not necessarily divided by different categories of what accounts for *art*. (2003, p. 3)

He offers a materialist distinction instead: ‘no budget, intensely personal and using quite different distribution and exhibition circuits’ (2003, p. 1). Broadly aligning with this view, in

this research, then, *avant-garde* refers to a social operation more than an aesthetic qualification; it recognises both artistic and political variants of the practice.⁴

Wollen's schema is also restricted to the default convention of film-theatrical exhibition. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, when the projection apparatus is liberated from the black box of the cinema space, new spatial and technological concerns presented further challenges to the orthodoxy of the *avant-garde*. For art historian Andrew V. Uroskie (2015, p. 54), the new category of *expanded cinema* is produced in this emancipation: 'the postwar expanded cinema divorced the idea of cinema from the historical contingency of this exhibitionary model, creating a new and provocative condition of homelessness for the moving image.' Augmenting the *avant-garde* film, *expanded cinema* sought to create a more participatory role for the viewer, employing a liveness, through performance or other interference, mostly outside of the traditional theatrical context. The practice disrupts what artist Malcolm Le Grice (2008) calls 'the single line of access to a story.' Elwes (2015, p. 165) describes expanded cinema as a turn 'away from conventional narrative' and a refocusing on 'the drama of the apparatus of film: the projector, the screen(s), the filmstrip, the projection beam, and the "primary experience," the "present tense" of the unique, one-off cinematic event.' Although eluding most in Scotland in this first iteration, revitalised by the affordances of digital projection in the 1990s, expanded cinema enters the consciousness of many.

The arrival of portable video recording technology in the 1970s further multiplied the categories of moving image practice. With similar objectives, early video art also developed from intense material investigations, differentiated by its core preoccupation with the apparatus of the television monitor. Leighton and Pavel Büchler (2003, p. 33) note a crossover in the shared attempts of expanded cinema and video art to 'articulate the aesthetics of the moving image outside or against the specifically cinematic.' In their social operation, however, each bore relatively self-contained cultures, consolidated in distinct working groups and medium-specific exhibition contexts. As video technology matured, its application as an artistic tool became the subject of further division, dissembled into what writer A.L. Rees (2011a, p. 97) has described as three distinct 'allied but often antagonistic' factions: *video art* 'concentrated on the conditions of video as a mode of perception and production'; with ties to performance, *artists' video* mobilised the technology as 'a rejection of traditional media'; and

⁴ This is particularly appropriate in the many cases where original film media is inaccessible or missing but the work's production or exhibition history can be understood from documentation.

thirdly, *community video*, concerned the potential socio-political ends of media access. Whilst the merits of these philosophies were subject to intense debate in polemics by artists David Hall (1996) and Stuart Marshall (1996), these categories also had material consequences for the organisation of video infrastructure in Scotland.

After 1989, the supremacy of the medium within categories of film and video practice fell into crisis. Described as the ‘post-media era’ or ‘age of the post-medium condition’ by theorists Félix Guattari (2015) and Rosalind Krauss (1999) respectively, these years witnessed a reconfiguration of relations between medium and practice. By 1995, Film and Video Umbrella director Steven Bode (2015, p. 66), for one, noticed that critics were exchanging *video art* for *artists’ video*, ‘a switch in semantics that [...] helped to emphasise the position of the artist over the role of technology.’ The deprioritisation of the medium was concurrent with growing interest in interdisciplinarity but also the long-awaited admission of film and video into mainstream programming and the market thereafter. In the same period, technological innovation and material enquiry became the domain of an emerging *new media art* that Bode (2015, p. 66) claims inhabited a ‘completely different orbit.’ Though formal overlaps abound, particularly in the mutual use of computer-generated imagery, the fields of new media and computer-based arts were attended to by increasingly discrete infrastructure, ultimately eschewing the conventions in production, distribution, exhibition and criticism that support artists’ moving image.

Invoking and extending O’Pray’s social model of the avant-garde, film historian Jonathan Walley (2008, p. 185) posits a new taxonomy for the 1990s organised around constitutional differences in the *mode of film practice*: ‘a simultaneously historical, institutional and discursive context constituted by the norms of production, distribution, exhibition and reception of film art.’ On the one hand he places the avant-garde film and on the other *artists’ film/video* or *film/video installation*. The former, Walley argues, is concerned with artisanal and acollaborative production, distributed through the rental model and exhibited primarily within the black box; the latter more closely resembles the collaborative mainstream studio production, sells as an editioned art object and exhibits in the white cube of the gallery. Elsewhere, filmmaker Anthony McCall (2003, p. 48) describes this binary as a ‘double helix’ of two spiralling modes of practice which never meet.

Walley’s schema is not prescriptive of form, proposing only that there are differing ‘material conditions under which aesthetic goals are formed by artists and recognised by spectators’

(2008, p. 185). In the black box, Büchler (2003, p. 47) offers elsewhere, film is ‘what takes place on the projection screen.’ The theatrical convention attempts to deliver the work divorced from its apparatus in a non-spatial encounter. Art historian Eric de Bruyn (2008, p. 112) likens this cinema to ‘a kind of writing’: a non-physical narrative structure realised across linear time. In the white cube, conversely, the work is encountered physically; the installation at large, as Claire Bishop (2005, p. 6) memorably theorised, ‘presupposes an *embodied* viewer.’ Configured this way, the moving image accommodates multiple points of entry, obscuring the linear, literary timeline conventionally established by the theatrical screening. Curator Christine van Assche (2003, p. 94) notes how ‘the model of writing as the basic structure of a work began to fade and be replaced by spatial narrative—the activation of the spectator no longer within a written narrative, but within a three-dimensional volume.’

In the twenty-first century, however, I argue that this polarisation no longer adequately reflects the increasingly blended social life of film and video. Walley’s black box/white cube binary describes distinct modes of production without accommodating practices which exist in between, reflecting a particular time—until the early 2000s—wherein this division proliferated more widely, characterised by the trend in large format digital projection as adopted in Scotland by artists like Douglas Gordon and Smith/Stewart. Today, artists’ moving image endures more mixed economic and exhibitionary contexts, including frequent and indiscriminate movement between theatrical and gallery-based presentations, multiplied further by broadcast and, since the 2010s, digital streaming platforms.⁵ In the UK, the dissolve of this binary over the last two decades owes much to LUX, whose definition of *artists’ moving image* and distribution thereof generously aggregates both modes of practice.⁶

Through this survey of categorisation, I hope to have articulated the capacities and limits of *artists’ moving image* as the titular focus of this study. In doing so, however, I have also mapped the development of a vocabulary born of consensus formed in the metropolitan centres of London or New York and grafted onto practices elsewhere. How these categories are interpreted, augmented and contested by artists’ working in Scotland, where material conditions diverge in myriad ways, forms an ongoing question in this mapping process. It is

⁵ At a recent panel discussion, Erika Balsom (Balsom *et al.*, 2021) suggested that the longstanding opposition between black box and white cube had now found some resolution, supplanted by another tension—sharply expedited by the conditions of lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic—in which the allied physical exhibition spaces of theatre and gallery now compete with online streaming.

⁶ LUX maintains the oppositional economies of the rental model and edition sale by facilitating the hire of a notional artists’ proof, preserving the market value of the work as a unique art object whilst promoting its access and ongoing circulation through screening hires.

with this provision that *artists' moving image* is understood as a placeholder for a plurality of interrelated forms, many uncategorised or indeed ambivalent about their categorisation, but which together comprise a chorus of dissenting voices, embracing film and video technologies in the expression of an aesthetic, social or political self-image.

Chapter One: Literature and Methodology

1.1 Literature review

Artists' moving image and its antecedent modes of practice are relatively young, whilst their attendant historiography is younger still. Engagement with avant-garde film can be located in the postwar years though this work is typically descriptive, functioning to translate the viewing experience. Theoretical enquiry only begins in earnest in the 1970s, at which point the dominance of American publishing is left largely unchecked. Beyond the dispersed critical outputs of British writers found in distribution catalogues and occasional contributions to journals and magazines like *Screen* (1953–), *Studio International* (1964–1993), latterly via *Undercut* (1981–1993) and *Vertigo* (1993–2012), the first attempts at articulating histories of artists' moving image in the UK do not occur until the mid-1990s. Academic analysis was distinctly sluggish in meeting the pace of artistic developments and, as Julia Knight (1996b, p. 2) and Michael O'Pray (2003, sec. preface) have noted, what little had been available was often self-produced. Since the mid-2000s, following the permeation of artists' moving image into mainstream contexts, a critical mass of scholarly attention has remedied this oversight. A number of ambitious archival, publishing and curatorial projects have since engendered a richer, more polyvocal discussion, including the launch of resources like the British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection (2000–), REWIND (2004–) and *Moving Image Review & Art Journal* (2012–). Amongst these developments, however, no single focus on Scotland as a discrete context has emerged. The following chapter delves further into these sources and the histories thereof. Its approach is twofold, evaluating firstly the occurrence of Scotland within histories of artists' moving image; then, conversely, the place of artists' moving image within histories of art and film in Scotland. Thereafter, it establishes a methodology and approach to the recovery of narratives it finds absent.

1.1.1 Scotland in artists' moving image

The history of artists' moving image in Scotland is not apart from that of its nation state, the UK. It is necessary, therefore, to understand firstly how that history emerged, before parsing the subcategory of Scottish within it. Writer and programmer David Curtis (2016) describes the earliest suggestion of a British avant-garde as found in two texts: Richard Foster and Frank Stauffacher's *Art in Cinema* (1947), pointing to filmmakers Len Lye and Norman McLaren, and Roger Manvell's *Experiment in the Film* (1949), which 'devotes just one short paragraph to the avant-garde.' Neither offers consequential analysis but hint at the possibility

of experimentation in Britain. It wasn't until the film co-ops of London and New York had focused attentions that a cluster of survey literature began to emerge. Curtis published *Experimental Cinema: A Fifty-Year Evolution* (1971), an overview concerned mostly with charting formal development. The text begins with early European avant-garde cinema, before turning to the 'personal' filmmaking of postwar New American Cinema in the work of Jonas Mekas, Stan Brakhage and Gregory Markopoulos (Curtis, 1971). By the author's admission, the book read 'like a laundry list' (Cawkwell and Curtis, 2014), prioritising description over critical rigour. In reproducing scholarly deference to an American hegemony, it also corroborates the findings of Sheldon Renan's *An Introduction to the American Underground Film* (1967)—labelled 'biographical and descriptive, rather than analytical' in one review (Callenbach, 1967)—and Parker Tyler's *Underground Film: A Critical History* (1970). Whilst access to film was considerably limited, these directory-like texts mostly function as proxies for the viewing experience. A critical framework instead arrived with 'passenger of Spaceship Earth' (1970, p. 3), Gene Youngblood's highly idiosyncratic treatise *Expanded Cinema* (1970) in which the theorist advocates for new video and computer-based technology's revolutionary socio-political potential, but, as Andrew V. Uroskie (2014, p. 9) notes, is 'far from the conspicuous rigor of structuralist equations' and rarely concerns an actual history for the films in discussion. Common to these tomes and others, however, is the blanket omission of contributions from women and ethnic minorities, both in the range of filmmaking practices discussed and amongst its authorship.⁷

Revised in iterative editions, these texts remained uncontested for some time. Editor Mark Webber (2007) explains that for years *Experimental Cinema* 'was one of only a handful of surveys,' the academicisation of artists' film and video arriving 'decades later.' In the intervening period, however, key theoretical advances were published in the UK by members of the LFMC including Peter Gidal's edited volume *Structural Film Anthology* (1976) and Malcolm Le Grice's *Abstract Film and Beyond* (1977). Amongst the video set, comparable foundational writings were contributed by artists David Hall, Tamara Krikorian and Stuart Marshall, with several collected in a special issue of *Studio International* (May/June 1976). Distinct from these philosophical exercises, however, the first attempts to establish a British historicisation, disentangled from European or American surveys, do not occur until the mid-1990s through a combined, reparative publishing scheme supported by the Arts Council of

⁷ In using the aggregate term *ethnic minorities*, I draw upon the recommendations of the Commission of Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021) and the current practices of the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights Scotland.

England. The three outputs of this, released simultaneously, include *A Directory of British Film and Video Artists* (1996), edited by Curtis; the anthology *The British Avant-Garde Film: 1926–1995* (1996), edited by Michael O’Pray; and *Diverse Practices: A Critical Reader on British Video Art* (1996), edited by Julia Knight. In tandem these begin to enrich the descriptive accounts that existed with theoretical, social, political, technological context.

Curtis’s functional directory serves as a catalogue of moving image artists, replete with distribution contacts, for a readership of exhibitors or researchers. Following the digitisation of distribution databases, the volume has become superfluous to its intended function, serving instead as a productive snapshot of historical values. Curtis (1996, p. 5) explains that the criteria for an artists’ inclusion is ‘that their work is in active circulation at this time, and is the subject of critical interest.’ Of the 120 featured, ten have connections to Scotland by birth, education or work including filmmakers Alia Syed, Tanya Syed and Margaret Tait (1996, pp. 188, 189, 190–192), though mostly comprising associates of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art (DJCA), Dundee, like video artists Lei Cox, Stephen Littman and Stephen Partridge (1996, pp. 34, 113, 142–143). Notable is the absence of those working with digital projection formats including Douglas Gordon, the recipient of that year’s Turner Prize, and his neo-conceptual peers, suggesting a colder reception to the emergence of what curator Chrissie Iles (2003, p. 137) later reconciles as the *new cinematic aesthetic*. Perhaps unavoidably, the directory produces a canon, deferent to film and video’s ‘golden age’ (Balsom, 2013b, p. 20).

O’Pray’s *The British Avant Garde Film* perceives and addresses a gap in literature on British avant-garde cinema and unlike its predecessors resists formalist discussion, aiming instead to provide a survey of theories, polemics and critical overviews of the tradition. For the first time, the anthology brings together influential historical essays including Peter Wollen’s ‘The Two Avant-Gardes,’ Curtis’s ‘English Avant-Garde Film: An Early Chronology’ (1975) and Gidal’s philosophical treatise ‘Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film’ (1976). Importantly, the anthology also platforms writing of dissent which challenges the pervasive maleness of criticism and history-making to date. Republished from the *Film as Film: Formal Experiment in Film 1910–1975* (Hayward Gallery, 1979) exhibition catalogue, for instance, Lis Rhodes’ ‘Whose History?’ admonishes the gendering of both film’s historical narrative and its narrators. The anthology includes further revisionism via Laura Mulvey on feminist filmmaking and Peter Wollen on the Thatcherite-era anti-modernist avant-garde of Derek Jarman. O’Pray’s anthology does much to establish an image of historical and ongoing

concerns in British avant-garde filmmaking and is particularly useful in outlining a pluralist conception of the *avant-garde* as a category. Nevertheless, the aim of representing a *British* context fails to exceed London, even perfunctory reference to differential regionalism remaining absent. This critique, as I set forth, comes to consistently undermine the vast corpus of survey-style historical writing on British moving image cultures.

Knight, meanwhile, opens her companion anthology, *Diverse Practices*, by addressing the dearth of collected critical writing which might supply legitimation and historicisation to the mature video art form in Britain. Knight (1996b, p. 2) notes that even video art's highest profile exhibitions like *The Video Show* (Serpentine Gallery, London, 1975) had failed to attract art critics. She contextualises this as part of a broader exclusion from the art establishment also manifest at the levels of funding and exhibition. These deficiencies were countered by the artists themselves who devised their own publishing and exhibitionary opportunities, leading to a dispersed body of writing spread across magazines, journals, festival programmes and distribution catalogues (Knight, 1996b, p. 2). *Diverse Practices* is posited as an exercise in consolidating a historiography amongst these sources and producing new ones. Mick Hartney (1996), for instance, offers an overview of British video art's troubled interaction with television programming, describing discursive tensions between the formalist and socio-political factions of early video production and the proliferation of each via broadcast, bookended by two resolutely Scottish projects: David Hall's *TV Interruptions* (1971), shown on Scottish Television during the Edinburgh Festival, and *19:4:90 Television Interventions* (1990), commissioned upon Glasgow's designation as European City of Culture (Hartney, 1996, pp. 40, 50). These factions are also the subject of Stuart Marshall's 'Video' (1985) and Hall's 'Early Video Art' (1991), which offer oppositional stances on the propagation of formalist tendencies in video art. Marshall (1996, p. 70) welcomes a dissolution of difference as 'community video workers increasingly question dominant televisual forms and video artists loosen their historical ties with modernism and begin to embrace issues of social and political relevance.' Hall (1996, p. 76) argues that accusations of formalism misread video artists' aims to interrogate acts of signification.

The changing constitution of video art is challenged in further texts including John Wyver's 'The Necessity of Doing Away with Video Art' (1991) and Michael Maziere's 'Passing Through the Image: British video art in the 1990s' (1996). Wyver (1996, p. 318) controversially calls for a singular moving image culture, unbounded by material separatism

and fit to contain ‘many different, overlapping and often contradictory strands within it.’ Written five years later, Maziere (1996, p. 338) reflects on the advance of this prediction, noting that ‘video has become far more pluralistic than it ever has been before [...] any medium-specific identity it once had as an autonomous art form is rapidly disappearing.’ These chapters together plot an historical development via its attendant theorisation, tracing a changing understanding of video media. *Diverse Practices* also features a chronology of key exhibitions, several Scotland-based (Knight, 1996a). It does not, however, resolve to assemble its fragments into a cogent historical narrative.

That task is undertaken by artist Chris Meigh-Andrews in *A History of Video Art* (2006). The ambition inferred by this monograph’s title is delimited by a timeline which concludes at the advent of digital projection, though a second edition (2013) enfolds recent concerns around the Internet and its myriad impacts on video. Despite the author’s recognition of video as an international phenomenon, importing ‘ideas and attitudes across national boundaries’ (2006, p. 2), the text is predominantly UK-focused. Meigh-Andrews provides a thorough overview of the philosophical and technical underpinnings of the medium in its infancy, summarising key artistic concerns around materiality whilst interrogating habits of separatism, questioning specifically whether the diversions of film and video were simply ‘brief, if productive’ detours (2006, p. 104). Though the book provides generous context to the contributions of Hall, Marshall and the LVA, it prioritises technical and aesthetic concerns over the social circumstances of organisations, exhibitions and funding.

In *REWIND: British Artists’ Video in the 1970s & 1980s* (2012)—the published output of an archive-building project of the same name—editors Sean Cubitt and Stephen Partridge augment this history with further accounts of video’s critical, exhibitionary and conservational development. They offer a convincing justification for using national parameters, specifically citing the material conditions of ‘weak international distribution’ and a ‘clash of broadcast standards’ that have propagated a context for video art bounded by geography (2012, p. 12). Jackie Hatfield’s ‘Resisting Definition’ (2012) addresses the negligence of institutions, new curators and critics to the video form, asserting a specificity to video art practices formed by a culture of necessity in which ‘artists themselves [...] instigated exhibition spaces or pushed for access to technologies’ (2012, p. 26). Project archivist Adam Lockhart’s chapter, ‘A Brief History of Video—Time and Base’ (2012), describes the problems and methods of video conservation, lending an unusual level of

technical detail that offers a productive means of understanding video within its technological context. In Malcolm Dickson's 'Vide Verso: Video's Critical Corpus' (2012), however, we find perhaps the closest progenitor to this body of research. Dickson provides a survey of video's development in the UK as told through its exhibitions, events and institutions. Informed by his own history of organising in Scotland, however, the chapter enjoys a strong Scottish bias, forming a useful map of activity. Touching on key activities including *Open Circuit* (Scottish Arts Council Gallery, Edinburgh, 1973); Elsa Stansfield and Madelon Hooykaas's installation *What's It To You* (Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, 1975); and *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* (Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, 1976), the chapter is particularly clear on formative projects in the 1970s (Dickson, 2012, pp. 136–139). His identification of organisers like Tamara Krikorian and Lesley Green produces leads pursued much further in this thesis, and, although delimited by the specific media- and period-focus of the volume, models an effective social history of art approach in the field.

Following the convergence of film and video practices in the 1990s, a unification of their respective histories became the prerogative for a new generation of scholarship in monographs beginning with A.L. Rees' *A History of Experimental Film and Video* (1999). In two distinct parts, Rees first describes a predominantly Eurocentric prehistory of artists' moving image, touching on experimental animation, surrealist filmmaking, and the postwar underground of New American Cinema. The book's second half, meanwhile, offers the first joint survey of film and video practices in Britain, from the foundation of the LMFC to the present. Rees writes with a close proximity to historical material, as advisor to the BFI, AHRC, Tate and Channel 4's *The Eleventh Hour* and having chaired the ACGB's Artists' Film and Video Committee, though fails to acknowledge this subjectivity.⁸ In pursuing an objective, formal analysis, however, he neglects the pressing social, political and institutional contexts in which this history is embedded. In one review, Felicity Sparrow (1999) adds,

discussion of content rather than physical context blurs some of the issues so pertinent right now: the different way we experience the continuously-running installation from the way we experience work of finite duration, and the different institutions and value systems which underpin and ultimately separate both.

Perhaps of most consequence, however, is Rees' omission of the possibility of regional heterogeneity, bar the unsubstantiated claim that 1970s regionalisation 'cracked open the

⁸ Revealingly, in a second edition Rees (2011a, p. ix) concedes his hope not to have 'disguised the partisan or polemical positions that underpin these sections.'

metropolis-led BFI [and ACGB]' (2011a, p. 100). Where questions of variation across Britain's substates might emerge, they are instead flattened into a linear, singular London-centred narrative, such as in the positioning of Douglas Gordon as one of the Young British Artists (YBA) (2011a, pp. 118–121). A second edition includes a reparative gesture towards Diversions Film Festival, Edinburgh (2008–2009) and Kill Your Timid Notion, Dundee (2003–2010) as instances of life up north though both were recycled from a separate essay, 'Expanded Cinema and Narrative: A Troubled History' (2011), had since been retired, and in neither instance receives more than cursory mention (Rees, 2011a, p. 139, 2011b, p. 19).

Rees' textbook established precedence for a number of volumes to further address historical deficiencies and offer more pluralised accounts, notable of which is *Art and the Moving Image* (2008), edited by Tanya Leighton and following the narrower anthology *Saving the Image: Art After Film* (2003), co-edited with Pavel Büchler. *Art and the Moving Image* opens with an explicit analysis and objective: 'in the absence of a comprehensive body of critical thought and art historical analysis of the subject, this book is offered as a first attempt to bring the field into focus' (Leighton, 2008, p. 8). Thereafter it collates historic and commissioned writing from artists, filmmakers, writers and theorists including Anthony McCall, Rosalind Krauss and Jonathan Walley, many earlier cited in my wrangling of definitions. The anthology manages a range of oppositional views, encouraging a more dialectical discussion that rejects the long shadow of formalist historiography, pointing to alternative means of narrativisation emerging from feminist and postcolonial study. Edited by Rees, Curtis, Steven Ball and Duncan White, *Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film* (2011) similarly opens with an address to the content-centred, 'primarily formalist,' approaches of prior research, making its case for the acknowledgement and exploration of 'the role of narrative in this field' (Rees *et al.*, 2011, p. 10). Despite this gambit, *Expanded Cinema* hardly breaks with a Greenbergian analysis; narrative, I argue, merely constituting another artistic technique. Neither is it concerned with a history of artworks in context.

The demand for a genealogy in the UK that privileges physical context finally finds its articulation in Catherine Elwes' *Installation and the Moving Image* (2015), a fastidious survey of artists' moving image's most ubiquitous twenty-first century form: the gallery installation. With the proviso that hybridity comprises the moving image installation's dominant characteristic, Elwes' enquiry is structured around the multiple and interrelated 'creative traditions from which it is descended' (2015, p. 2), including architecture, painting,

performance and film proper. This structure permits broad analyses of numerous discrete installations, paying particular attention to their spatial and sensory realisation, including significant examples from Scotland-based projects like David Hall's *Vidicon Inscriptions* (1975), central to *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* (Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, 1976) (Elwes, 2015, p. 239). In its approach, using personal encounters as phenomenological evidence, it resolves Sparrow's call for a history of the physical context of the moving image, but is still relatively divorced from the concentric situations of economic, institutional and exhibitionary support which would fully constitute a social history of art approach.

In this model there is perhaps only one book-length forbearer to the intention of this research. David Curtis's *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain* (2007) constitutes the first monograph on a specifically British history of artists' moving image, providing a vital map of infrastructure and the often-invisible influence of its economies. Curtis identifies organisations designed by and for British moving image artists since the 1920s, followed by a blow-by-blow analysis of thematic patterns, providing an evolution for each that positions British developments alongside international counterparts. The text links historic communities of film societies, co-ops, and other production-oriented groups to create a holistic narrative, whilst accommodating their own differential politics, aesthetics, and terminologies. Curtis ventures into a discussion of the economies which supply or drive moving image production, though is overdue a revision given the years since publication. Familiar, however, is the author's neglect of regional variation; the titular Britain is mostly exchangeable for England and the enduring dominance of London as a centre remains largely unchallenged. The study includes limited overviews of earlier Scottish filmmakers John Grierson, Norman McLaren, and Margaret Tait, but recognition of a discrete Scottish production environment ends here. Curtis (2007, p. 2) acknowledges this bias, arguing that artistic deference to London is a material claim:

Often in this history, success for an individual has depended upon the existence of the critical mass of a group of sympathetic peers. [...] London as a cosmopolitan centre with a large media industry and strong international connections has proved an irresistible magnet, with which artists based in the regions have had at very least to negotiate a relationship.

As this thesis argues, however, this truism warrants further challenge. A historiography largely written by its own actors continually reproduces this bias, and, as latter studies augment and pluralise the narrative, this assertion becomes increasingly unconvincing.

Whilst Curtis pioneers a valuable integration of funding histories with aesthetic ones, and despite his advantageous professional position in doing so, the text is limited in its omission of the non-English contexts produced by fifty years of cultural devolution.

Beginning to grapple with this plurality, the recent volume *Artists' Moving Image in Britain Since 1989* (2019), edited by Erika Balsom, Lucy Reynolds and Sarah Perks, opens with an intention to avoid any 'reductive picture of this diverse field of practice' in 'considering artists and artworks alongside the organisations, institutions and economies in which they exist' (Balsom, Reynolds and Perks, 2019, p. 8). The editors explicitly recognise an unsung variety and geographic spread that sits 'contrary to the emphasis on London-based filmmakers of a systematic persuasion that prevails in many existing histories of UK artists' film in the 1970s' (2019, p. 11). Thereafter, chapters by writers like Melissa Gronlund (2019) and Maeve Connolly (2019) reflect on the performance of Britishness in the 1990s and the artists' feature film. Of particular significance, however, contributions from Stephen Partridge (2019) and Nicole Yip (2019) respectively account for the development of the influential Electronic Imaging postgraduate diploma at DJCA after 1986, and of the national agency LUX Scotland since 2014, where they each worked. These fragments, though modest in scale, add a decidedly Scottish context to the British survey. Treated as personal testimonies, Partridge and Yip's reflections each supply productive source material to overviews of their respective focuses in this research.⁹

1.1.2 Artists' moving image in Scotland

The search for Scotland in studies of British artists' moving image generally produces dissatisfactory results. Inverting these axes, it is important to also consider bodies of scholarship on Scottish art and film, determining the extent to which these support an understanding of artists' moving image. Scholarly attention towards the former begins in earnest with curator Duncan Macmillan's *Scottish Art 1460–1990* (1990), revised as *Scottish Art 1460–2000* (2000), and its derivation *Scottish Art in the 20th Century* (1995, 2001). These surveys pay relatively little attention to postmodern forms of practice, neglecting a critical framework in favour of qualitative judgements—'[Douglas] Gordon is a far more thoughtful artist [than Damien Hirst]' (Macmillan, 2000, p. 410). Macmillan's understanding of the moving image in particular recognises, without naming, the *new cinematic aesthetic* that characterises global preoccupation in the 1990s: 'the choice by younger artists of film—

⁹ See sections 3.2.3 and 5.3.3.

whether cinema or television film no longer matters—as their preferred medium makes good sense, for it is the dominant mode of consumable communication and entertainment’ (2000, p. 411). Here he positions the moving image as a consequence of a generalised media culture, eschewing its long history as though it arrived fully formed and without precedence—despite his reference to artists Eduardo Paolozzi, Bruce McLean and Mark Boyle for whom film, video and projection were important tools. Along similar lines, art historian Murdo Macdonald’s survey *Scottish Art* (2000) is too culpable of atheoretical generalisation, truncating activity post-1960 to a slender canon of internationally successful artists: Ian Hamilton Finlay, Steven Campbell, Douglas Gordon, Christine Borland.

Curator and writer Sarah Lowndes (2010, p. 8) has argued that by 2003 in Scotland, ‘no sustained critical attention had been given to the connections between artists, nor to the social context in which their work had developed.’ Upon this assertion begins her own formative excavation, *Social Sculpture: The Rise of the Glasgow Art Scene* (2003, revised 2010). Lowndes (2010, p. 7) describes this book as a social history ‘which charts the emergence of performance and conceptual-related practice in Glasgow from the early 1970s onwards.’ Her approach approximates social network theory, not to be confused with the social history of art, concerning the interaction of individuals and parties within a network. The text collates a remarkable wealth of oral testimony in mapping the cultural scene of Glasgow with particular concern for Transmission as the locus for a distinguished cohort of neo-conceptual artists who emerged in the 1980s. At times, this presents as hagiographic, pinning complex developments onto the actions of a few key characters, whilst empirical data, where available, is often inaccurate. Regardless, the text hazards a rich first outline of an overlooked history, signposting innumerable activities for further study and corroboration, including situating relevant film and video organisations like EventSpace (2010, p. 90) within their social context.

The primacy of such organisations is a key concern for art historian Neil Mulholland’s monograph *The Cultural Devolution: Art in Britain in the Late Twentieth Century* (2003) also published that year. Focused on ‘the indeterminate relationship between institutions and practical/theoretical shifts in the British artworld from 1975 to the end of 2000’ (Mulholland, 2003b, p. 1), *The Cultural Devolution* plots aesthetic and critical development against the UK’s political decentralisation and increasingly devolved art economy. The book’s closing chapter ‘Art after Britain?’ devotes substantial analysis to the neo-conceptual group who

collectivised around The Glasgow School of Art's (GSA) Department of Environmental Art after 1985. Mulholland uses the example of Scotland's cultural activity to demonstrate the oppositional manifestations of economic and political devolution: the decentralising explosion of internationally networked artist-led spaces such as Transmission, Glasgow (1983–) on the one hand and the re-centralising force of lottery-funded arts centres like Dundee Contemporary Arts (1999–) on the other (2003b, pp. 149–150). Mulholland has written widely elsewhere on contemporary art in Scotland, featuring as a contributor to programme notes, polemics and chapters. With Deborah Jackson and Dan Brown, in the article 'Artists Running: Fifty Years of Scottish Cultural Devolution' (2018) he further examines the New 57 Gallery, Edinburgh (1966–1984), Collective, Edinburgh (1984–) and Transmission, plotting the development of the autonomous artist-led space in Scotland. His contribution to the anthology *Scottish Cinema Now* (2009), 'Reel 2 Real Cacophony: United Artists' Twenty-First Century Pictures,' surveys the interlocking practices of artists' film and video in Scotland, signposting projects like Flourish Nights, Shadazz, The Open Eye Club, The Magic Lantern, each of which find further articulation in this research.

The first and only monograph on the histories of postmodern and contemporary visual art in Scotland, however, arrives with artist and academic Craig Richardson's *Scottish Art since 1960: Historical Reflections and Contemporary Overviews* (2011). Representing a remarkable effort in bringing together disparate fragments and addressing the gaps, its opening chapter provides a substantial overview of literature, uncovering an ecology of critical sources including the oeuvre of art critic Cordelia Oliver, *Variant* (1984–1985; 1987–1994; 1996–2012) and *MAP* (2005–), which each lend shape to this thesis. Thereafter, Richardson develops a narrative that links exhibitions and projects, with some explication of their curatorial and institutional circumstance, in service to the ascendance of certain figures like Boyle (2011, p. 45) or Gordon (2011, p. 157). The book doesn't necessarily offer a corrective to the canonisation of some Scottish artists—often by influential extranational agents—instead recuperating these narratives within a national history. In this way, *Scottish Art since 1960* forms a useful foundation, espousing a porous view of place that is also enjoyed by this research, though invites further investigation into its lesser acknowledged subjects.

Neither Lowndes, Mulholland nor Richardson are especially attentive to moving image practices aside from acquiescing to their development within a global pattern. Locating the

specificity of these histories relies on another approach. In another way, recent histories of art in Scotland can be traced through the successive published output of major survey shows, including the *Smith Biennial* (Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum, 1989), *New Art in Scotland* (White, 1994), *Here + Now: Scottish Art 1990–2001* (Brown and Tufnell, 2001), and most recently in the nationwide exhibition programme *GENERATION: 25 Years of Contemporary Art in Scotland* (Jeffrey, 2014b). To these we might add *Transmission* (McLauchlan and Stephenson, 2001), which offers a comprehensive timeline of the eponymous organisation's development and programme, 1983–2001. The growing presence of artists' moving image in these census-like documents offers a productive reflection of changing institutional priorities, testifying to the form's proliferation within white cube contexts.

It is important also to consider the artist monograph as a source from which to recover histories; scholarship certainly surrounds the work of *enfant terribles* Boyle, McLean, Gordon, with more recent writing attending to Rosalind Nashishibi, Luke Fowler and Rachel Maclean. However, this publishing largely develops extranationally, often within the context of international exhibition-making and as such is reserved only for individuals already established. As Kirsteen Macdonald (2013) notes, in Scotland 'only a few institutions produce catalogues or commission texts alongside their exhibition production.' Lowndes (2010, p. 8) similarly finds that for Glasgow artists, critical appraisal is 'mainly funded by institutions outside Glasgow, and most often, outside the UK.' These conditions contribute to a general dearth of artist monographs, whilst the little writing that is commissioned is rarely alert to the specific material circumstances of being Scotland-based.

Amongst the most reliable source literature comes instead from the criticism published by artists and art workers themselves in the specialist magazines *Variant*, *Alba* (1986–1989) and *MAP*, all now digitised. The development of film and video criticism in Scotland comprises a focused strand of this research and is integrated throughout these chapters, however, there are key essays worth extracting here for their particular contribution to historical overview. From *Variant*, Alan Robertson's '101 Things to Do with Time' (1987), Malcolm Dickson and Chris Byrne's 'Moving History' (1998) and Ann Vance's 'Who's Afraid of Film and Video in Scotland?' (1999). From *Alba*, Stephen Partridge's 'Artists Television' (1987). And, from *MAP*, Mason Leaver-Yap's 'Can Video Thrive as a Marginal Activity?' (2006b) and Dickson's retort 'Reply: Absent Narratives' (2007). Sutured to their respective contexts, each

of these short texts offer an insight into provision in transition. The positions they establish form primary evidence in my historicisation of critical frameworks for artists' moving image in Scotland.

Outwith informal writing, however, art-historical scholarship on artists' moving image in Scotland remains stubbornly lacking. There are, however, a few notable contributions emanating from the discipline of film studies which intersect with this field. Like visual art, film in Scotland has been the subject of a handful of surveys which, although limited in their concern for artists' moving image, offer a guide to the organisational histories that many artists have navigated. This scholarship ostensibly begins with *Scotch Reels: Scotland in Cinema and Television* (1982), edited by Colin McArthur, in which Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF) director Jim Hickey (1982) provides a useful chronology of filmmaking to date. In its successor, *From Limelight to Satellite: A Scottish Film Book* (1990), edited by Eddie Dick, reflections on the Scottish self-image by Robin MacPherson (1990), the first years of the Scottish Film Production Fund (SFPF) by its director Ian Lockerbie (1990), and of the impact of Channel 4 by John Caughie (1990) map a new wave of infrastructure into which artist-filmmakers like Lesley Keen and Pictorial Heroes created space for experimentation. In *Screening Scotland* (2000), film historian Duncan Petrie (2000b) examines the work of particular filmmakers, including the 'art cinema' of animator Norman McLaren and Margaret Tait, from which I draw briefly.

Not until the late 2000s, however, does a small body of research begin to excavate the role of radical aesthetics and politics within Scottish filmmaking. In *Scottish Cinema Now* (2009), edited by Jonathan Murray, Fidelma Farley and Rod Stoneman, we find Mulholland's aforementioned essay on artist-filmmaking alongside film historian Sarah Neely and Alan Riach's 'Demons in the Machine: Experimental Film, Poetry and Modernism in Twentieth-Century Scotland' (2009), which unfurls a network of pan-European education and influence in the work of Tait and Enrico Coccozza. Through Neely's extended body of work on Tait, culminating in the monograph *Between Categories: The Films of Margaret Tait: Portraits, Poetry, Sound and Place* (2016) and the centenary archival and exhibitionary project Margaret Tait 100 (2018–2019)—which I helped coordinate—a corollary case study is offered in the artist's navigation of hostile film policy. In an earlier chapter, "“Ploughing a lonely furrow”: Margaret Tait and professional filmmaking practices in 1950s Scotland"

(2009), for instance, Neely carefully establishes the context of early provision and specifically the role of financing in independent filmmaking in Scotland.

In the most recent of these sibling anthologies, *Directory of World Cinema: Scotland* (2014), edited by Bob Nowlan and Zach Finch, we find perhaps the closest precedence to my approach in MacPherson's chapter 'Cultural Crossover: Radical and Engaged Cinema' (2014). With a focus on organisational and policy histories, including the arrival of public film funding in Scotland in 1982 and the substrata of production groups, film festivals and critical writing, the chapter narrates the development of radical film cultures (MacPherson, 2014, pp. 36–37). Invoking a sense of the political avant-garde, this history enjoys a role within the expanded category of artists' moving image as employed here and whilst MacPherson generally avoids the visual arts context, his writing plots a number of key junctures with crossover consequences.

Through this survey of literature, I hope to have laid bare the extent to which existent knowledge on the field as I have defined it is so often contingent, fragmentary or otherwise partial, leaving dramatic gaps which this thesis hopes to supply with new primary research. While this writing together signposts several points of entry, offering the basis of a chronology and its agents—artists, events, organisations—it does so upon diverse and discordant agendas and rarely with much corroboration. Though I call upon certain of these texts in close-level discussions of individual artists, works and activities, in order to best reflect a broader material reality in the absence of real scholarly precedence, this research prioritises the use of original archive and oral testimony in its historical reconstruction. In this, it posits the most fitting framework for recovery to be the *social history of art*.

1.2 On the social history of art

This research identifies its methodology as a *social history of art* approach in order to position itself within a rigorous critical tradition and to establish certain remits. The specification of methodologies within the art historical discipline is paramount in demarcating scope, engendering reflexivity and opening possibilities for the critique of a text's efficacy. Art historian Dawn Adès (1986, p. 12) describes this process:

Faced with the threat of infinite regression, the historian has to abstract; all histories suppress certain phenomena, events, names, dates, ideas, and preserve others. It is a matter therefore of recognising the level of abstraction involved, of perceiving the myth in our idea of history.

Tasked with the undertaking of historical recovery at such scale, the social history of art provides instruction on what to excavate, offering a rubric for research processes. Where other methodologies—feminist, decolonial or queer—offer a means to challenge orthodoxy, these imply the pretext of an available foundation to contest. As a field, artists' moving image in Scotland lacks a basis for revision, necessitating considerable groundwork in order to establish the most elementary facts. I argue here that the social history of art offers the most appropriate means of doing so whilst also contributing a corollary narrative about the flows of power (economic, institutional) which best serves an advocacy function today, substantiated, where possible, with empirical data. This methodology, I add, can and should be equipped with a feminist, decolonial and queer ethic, but finds its architecture in examining *the conditions of production*, interpreted here as infrastructures of exhibition, organisations and cultural policy. I now hope to evaluate the limits of this methodological position.

The synthesis of the social history of art approach is often attributed to a singular text by Marxist art historian T.J. Clark. First published in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 'The Conditions of Artistic Creation' (1974), contested the postwar epoch of art history, which, in Clark's view, had been allied to theme-chasing formalist analysis, becoming 'manservant of the art market' (1995, p. 250). His polemic was preceded by art historian Arnold Hauser's adoption of the term as the title of his volumes *The Social History of Art* (1951) which narrated art history via the Marxist premise that society and style constitute a unified whole. Hauser's approach, however, some argued, 'treated the relationship between art and society too generally' (Orwicz, 1985, p. 54). Clark's article retrieved this idea, with altered definition, as a 'work of theory and practice' that should determine *facts* 'about patronage,

about art dealing, about the status of the artist, the structure of artistic production' (Clark, 1995, p. 251). Calling for a substitution of *artistic creation*, and the hagiographies that might engender, for notions of *artistic production* and *signification*, Clark's social history of art is differentiated in establishing a causal, rather than reflective, correlation between capital and art. These ideas were further cultivated in UK journals like *Art History* (1978–), *Screen* (1952–) and *Block* magazine (1979–1985), which in the 1970s, A.L. Rees and Frances Borzello (1986, p. 5) note, 'adopted and adapted the structural Marxism of Louis Althusser.'

A *Marxist art history*, however, presents a paradox. Firstly, as a totalising theory of society, Marxism casts any disciplinary boundary as a bourgeois reification of knowledge. Secondly, as Andrew Hemingway (2006a, p. 2) explains, Karl Marx never in fact wrote about aesthetics, and as such any Marxist art history is necessarily interpretative, pieced together from fragments and the broader doctrine of *historical materialism*. He adds,

Within the broad purview of historical materialism, art was left with a considerable degree of relative autonomy, and it provided no formulas as to how the determining influence of the economic was to be understood in its relationship with all the other causal factors. (2006a, p. 4)

In effect, the necessity of interpretation has generated a situation of multiple readings. An older school of Hauser, Francis Klingender and Frederick Antal essentially wrote formalist analyses supplemented by concern for how economic, often mercantile conditions have been expressed through the content and form of an artwork—the controversial formalist critic Clement Greenberg was notably a supporter of Hauser's volumes (Orwicz, 1985, p. 57). Conservatives like Walter Abell criticised the 'economic determinism' of Hauser's approach, that deprioritised 'the psychological complexity of creative experience' (Orwicz, 1985, p. 56). Though psychoanalytical reading is mostly discredited, Abell usefully identifies a single-mindedness to the social history of art in its relegation of non-economic agents in artistic production.

For a subsequent generation this didacticism was surrendered by the invitation of plurality. Writing in 1991, O.K. Werckmeister (1991, p. 84) argued that 'the Marxist tradition can provide the categories with which to confront this diffuse, deceptive expansion of an indeterminate social history of art, since cause and effect are the fundamental categories of Marxist thought.' That is, the Marxist approach can be retooled: less an equation of economy and art, more a schema for organising nebulous historical actuality. Elsewhere, Adès (1986, p. 13) reminds us art 'is not hermetic and autonomous, but bound up with the social and

economic movements of its time, as well as conditioned by both artistic tradition and aesthetic ideology' and John Tagg (1986, p. 171) offers that 'no singular strategy can do anything but conceal the inherent complexities and necessary diversity of responses.' These views appreciate a more complex framework for historical analysis. They also corroborate an important clarification about historical materialism made by Friedrich Engels (quoted in Hemingway, 2006a, p. 3):

According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of material life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase.

That is, historical materialism and therefore the social history of art should recognise composite realities, primarily driven by economic factors, but subject to an infinite number of other agents, i.e. aesthetic tradition, gender, ethnicity, technology. With this provision, Clark's reconstituted social history of art is understood not as a singular mode of macro-analysis, but as a series of questions conceived to uncover the actual and specific contexts that permit artistic production. He asks,

What are the artist's *resources*, and what do we mean when we talk of an artist's materials—is it a matter, primarily, of technical resources, or pictorial tradition, or a repertory of ideas and the means to give them form? [...] What exactly were the conditions and relations of artistic production in a specific case? Just *why* are these particular ideological tools used, and not others? Just what determined this particular encounter of work and ideology? (Clark, 1995, pp. 249, 252)

These questions provide a rubric for historical enquiry, steering the direction from context to art. As Rees and Borzello (1986, p. 6) describe, 'the strand in mainstream art history which tried to place art in its social context began from the art and worked outwards; the new form reverses the procedure, looking from the social fabric to the art it produces.'

Rees and Borzello (1986, p. 2) also position the revised social history of art within a developing *new art history*: 'a capacious and convenient title that sums up the impact of feminist, Marxist, structuralist, psychoanalytic, and social-political ideas.' This association binds Clark's methodology to the New Left scholarship. For some this had a blunting effect. Paul Overy (1986, p. 139) has described this as an ambiguity of stance that 'usually takes the guise of "complexity" and "shifting meanings," falling over backward to avoid the abyss of vulgar Marxism.' Clark himself was antipathetic to the 'pursuit of the New' (1995, p. 250)

and bemoaned the tendency of an art history ‘which feels the need to refer to those historical realities with which artist and patron are constantly in contact, but which dares not name those structures which mediate and determine the nature of that contact’ (quoted in Hemingway, 2006b, p. 179).

Methodologies, as much as the artworks they frame, are of course susceptible to trends. Critic James Elkins (2007, p. 13) reminds us that ‘some theories are limited in their appeal; they become briefly popular, and then they disappear.’ The proximity of Marxism, and the social history of art by extension, to communism and its political ideologues has strained its academic popularity. Concurrent with the collapsing of the Eastern Bloc, Hemingway (2006b, p. 181) notes that Marxist papers at the Association of Art Historians’ annual conference depleted throughout the 1980s, the dominant mood of the UK and US academy replaced with ‘a kind of liberal pluralism’ (Hemingway, 2006a, p. 1). Though the social history of art does not proffer a framework for everything, as has been confirmed by the challenge of feminism, gender studies and post-colonial theory, it maintains a precision in its description of actual contexts of artistic production that prepares a ground for further study and augmentation. I argue that in reanimating this methodology in conversation with the emergence of the newer subfields of cultural policy research and *exhibition history*, that it offers a powerful architecture for the recovery of artistic work in its widest context.

As the popularity of the social history of art approach waned, a new field in art historical research ascended in the exhibition history. In this crossover, I argue, a partial reconstitution occurred with the latter absorbing and extending the former’s remit. Art historian Jeannine Tang (2016, p. 97) describes how ‘exhibition history began as something to be invented, forged from scraps, extracted from the social history of art, and emerging concurrently with the rise of museum studies, cultural studies, and visual culture.’ Elsewhere, art historian Bruce Altshuler (2010, p. 5) describes its precipitation from two factors: ‘the changing landscape of art history, with its expanding interests in social and institutional histories, and perhaps more importantly, the curatorial boom of the late 1980s and 1990s.’ Following the development of curatorial studies programmes in this period, the professionalisation of the curatorial field has, Felix Vogel (2013, p. 47) notes, ‘presupposed a sense of its own history.’ Periodicals including *The Exhibitionist* (2010–), *Journal of Curatorial Studies* (2012–), and publishing projects like Afterall’s *Exhibition Histories* series (2010–) have since supplied legitimacy to the exhibition history, consolidating its position as an autonomous discipline.

For the purposes of this research it is essential to fully articulate a position on the relationship between the social history of art and the exhibition history. Tang (2016, p. 99) understands them as sibling domains, against a historiographic positioning of the latter ‘as the Oedipal successor or critical corrective of the former.’ The social histories of art are not supplanted but instead ‘remain useful for their attention to consider the institutional, structural, and infrastructural forces that make certain kinds of curatorial work more possible to produce, and more likely to be historicised and available’ (Tang, 2016, p. 99). For the social art historian, meanwhile, Altshuler (2010, p. 10) claims that ‘looking at exhibitions reveal previously ignored works and enlarge the cast of characters beyond the established players, it adds to the descriptive and explanatory mix a range of important social, economic and political factors.’ He continues,

Exhibitions are central nodes of intersection of the individuals and institutions whose activity constitutes a complex cultural field, points of overlap among artists, dealers, critics, curators, collectors, journalists, historians, museum and other cultural officials, politicians, and members of various art-viewing publics. (2010, p. 10)

The exhibition, therefore, is indispensable to the objective of historical materialism, whilst an understanding of the conditions of production are vital to the exhibition historian. In the case of this research, such co-dependence, or co-production, enables a free and indiscriminate movement between the two. Moreover, as a catalyst for collaboration, correspondence and the object of so much documentation, the exhibition is amongst the best archived of events. While organisational, economic and political activities cannot always be tethered to a specific moment, the exhibition provides a finitude. The social history of art framework of this thesis, therefore, often clings to the locus of the exhibition, expanded in its meaning to encompass both gallery and screening, festival, conference or symposia.

My wrangling of a theory of historicisation has thus far been indifferent to the specific circumstance of the moving image as a non-traditional media. When Clark first proselytised his social history of art it was within the context of nineteenth century French painting. How then can we graft one approach onto a mode of practice entirely different in form and context? In order to do so, it is important to find a precedence for such approaches within postmodern and contemporary screen-based practices. For one, Rees (2011a, p. 4) considers the moving image within an undifferentiated category of art equally susceptible to economic forces, arguing that ‘no art exists free of material context, whether conceived in terms of property and patronage [...] or in those of market forces and sponsorship.’ Even amongst

early avant-garde cinema a contingency was understood between formal innovation and the economies of moving image production. In 1932, Germaine Dulac (1978, p. 43) resolved that:

The cinema is an art and an industry. Considered as art, it must jealously defend its purity of expression and never betray that purity in order to convince. But it is also an industry. To make film and distribute it require money, a lot of money.

Though often fraught, the straightforwardness of this correlation perhaps accounts for the release that filmmaking appears to have from the instruction of aesthetic tradition which so pervades traditional plastic media. Video is no different. Jackie Hatfield (2012, p. 26) has described how in its development funding ‘was obviously crucial to the continuation of the electronic moving-image experiment, as it was with film.’ Perhaps more so than traditional media, the moving image has formed a uniquely close relationship with its economies as a consequence of its material circumstance, i.e. production outlays or the challenge of distribution.¹⁰ In Scotland, this relationship often manifests in narratives of overcoming adverse economies; the situation of financing having been derided by artist-filmmakers spanning Margaret Tait (1988) to those I interviewed in 2020 and 2021. As we will see, this paucity has bred specific aesthetic innovations, from low- and no-budget work to the smuggling of fine art approaches into industrial funding schemes, but has too limited an untold number of works.

I hope to have established here an efficient case for the appropriateness and applicability of the social history of art approach in the recovery of a much marginalised and poorly understood history. In order to enact this theoretical framework, however, it is necessary to first unpack the two primary research methods which provide complementary approaches to historical recovery outside of existing historicisation and its, as I have shown, insufficient literature: namely, the practices of *archival research* and the *oral history interview*. The remainder of this chapter will describe my critical and practical negotiation of these methods.

¹⁰ Erika Balsom (2013c, 2013a, 2016) writes extensively on the latter.

1.3 On archives

This research draws upon a broad range of repositories, from personal holdings to those of national institutions. It endorses a post-structuralist conception of archives as mediating agents, informed by invisible—and partially unknowable—layers of material context. The archive can take diverse forms and host diverse materials, though we may find consensus, as art historian Charles Merewether (2006, p. 10) notes, in its core facility, distinct from the collection or library, as the source of history's foundational narrative unit: the document or record—what Michel Foucault (2006) has otherwise termed a *statement*. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Foucault advocates for the revelatory potential of deducing the *historical a priori* from any archival context. Borrowing from Kant's analysis of reason, which divides knowledge around its independence from (*a priori*) or dependence upon (*a posteriori*) empirical experience, the philosopher diagnoses an erroneous understanding that the archive exclusively reflects the latter, that it is simply a repository of empirical evidence. Instead, he articulates a value in uncovering the less conspicuous *a priori*, the system of tacit logic and material influence which anticipates and organises the collection, or 'a condition of reality for statements' (Foucault, 2006, p. 26). In application, these might include collecting scope, physical circumstance or provenance—i.e. layers of historical custodianship—consequential systems which enable a statement's passage into the archive. In the following pages, I expand upon this theoretical framework, surveying relevant repositories whilst attending to policies and histories which have mediated their holdings.

As discussed, *artists' moving image* is a relative neologism that aggregates practices from varied contexts. No Scottish archive's collecting scope meets this definition precisely, though a range intersect the field upon differing agendas. Sarah Neely's article 'Discoveries in the biscuit tin: The role of archives and collections in the history of artists' moving image in Scotland' (2017) is perhaps the only published evaluation of this interface. She notes that in Scotland, as elsewhere, context and content are both influenced by institutional affiliation: 'an archive resource attached to an art museum will have different collection priorities from a national film archive' (2017, p. 135). She links the regular omission of artist-filmmakers from historical accounts to decades-long problems of archival absence and misrepresentation to the extent that 'even histories written specifically about artists' moving image suffer from losses incurred by the lack of attention previously given to establishing a history of early experimental works in Scotland' (2017, p. 136).

The physical circumstances which inform archives in Scotland are also manifold. In April 2000, for instance, documents and artworks held in the Scottish Arts Council's Stenhouse store were damaged by flood (Law, 2020; Scottish Arts Council, c. 2000). Organisational policies too effect holdings; whilst artistic and curatorial work largely leaves some record, neither the SAC nor its successors Creative Scotland / Screen Scotland control a public archive, leaving cultural policy documentation widely dispersed. More benign changes in personnel or technology, as in the drop-off in paper correspondence incurred in the digital era, have similarly impactful consequences. Provenance too has a deep repercussion for access. The archives of a number of closed Scottish galleries, for example, are housed by National Galleries Scotland (NGS), though countless other projects are not, whilst the National Library of Scotland's Moving Image Archive (NLSMIA) has absorbed the records of the former Scottish Film Production Fund and the Scottish Film Council (SFC).

These *conditions of reality* are liable to transform over time. Foucault (2006, p. 27) writes that an understanding of the archive must therefore 'take account of statements in their dispersion, in all the flaws opened up by their non-coherence, in their overlapping and mutual replacement, in their simultaneity, which is not unifiable, and in their succession, which is not deductible.' That is, the historical *a priori* suffers a non-fixity whereby innumerable factors suspend it in ongoing discourse: it 'does not elude historicity' (Foucault, 2006, p. 27). This deconstructivist view ultimately extends to the conclusion that 'the archive cannot be described in its totality' (Foucault, 2006, p. 29). Alluding to the impossibility of a complete analysis of any archive, this sentiment underwrites the critical and capacious approach of my research which aims to situate each repository within its actual context and collecting framework though which recognises the infeasibility of a fully reconciled, gapless account.

Particular to the moving image, an additional series of epistemological concerns are raised by film historian Sarah Street. In *British Cinema in Documents* (2000), she advocates for greater reflection upon the methods at work in film historicisation:

There has long been a need for film historians to stand back and consider their aims and methods [...] since postmodern critiques of the relationship between 'the past' (something which did occur) and 'history' (an interpretative construct created by historians) have raised key questions regarding the very nature of those aims and methods. (2000, p. 1)

Transposed from discussions of mainstream filmmaking to artists' moving image, Street's position maintains currency: the document, record or statement offers a small resistance to

the abstractions of historiography, returning analysis to the past, rather than iterative interpretations of it. Street (2000, p. 5) also notes that ‘documents which are relevant to a particular film, issue or personality acquire significance because of a specific set of circumstances which have determined their existence and survival.’ She turns attention to factors of determination—invoking Foucault’s *a priori*—indicating a circuitous link between significant historical subjects and the preservation of relating documents. In application, this implores a conscientious approach; whilst the archive might help navigate beyond historicisation, its gluts and gaps are inherently a reflection of it.

To avoid blindly reproducing any such historicisation, this research benefits from a corroborative approach, synthesising data across differing archives, divisible into two main types. Firstly, it is interested in archives of *moving image media* as collections which, like art collections, enact authored forms of historicisation and which, in the analysis of their inclusions and exclusions, might demonstrate changing institutional conceptions about the cultural, social or political significance of work. Secondly, it is concerned with establishing material circumstance through numerous holdings of *documentation* including reports, papers, correspondence, press, photography and other ephemera. The relationship between these two concentrations is irregular, in archives which contain both their interrelation ranges from supplementary, as in the case of REWIND, to mostly separate, as at the NLSMIA. What follows now is an analysis of each, offering a guide to the locations of the primary material which underwrites this research.

1.3.1 Collections of moving image media

The archive of moving image media invokes a specific set of access considerations, quite separate to the theoretical bases already outlined and largely relating to the availability of film and video within contexts of conservation and technological obsolescence. Writing before the campaign of digitisation had produced partial solutions, Penelope Houston (1994, p. 2) remarks that ‘preserving a film heritage is no easy business.’ Prior to the adoption of the polyester base, film suffered problems of degradation in cellulose acetate, worse still amongst its infamously flammable predecessor cellulose nitrate (National Film Preservation Foundation, 2004, p. 9). Elsewhere, REWIND archivist Adam Lockhart (2012, p. 190) offers a comparable prognosis for video tape, describing the problems of ‘sticky shed syndrome’ in which atmospheric moisture degrades the plastic binder in tape, affecting ‘the majority of

work on ½ inch EIAJ and CV open reel format.’¹¹ Although reversible in most cases, the necessary conservation work, he adds, ‘will invariably cause damage’ (Lockhart, 2012, p. 190). As access to film and video material is often contingent on conservation status, the prioritising and selection of works for preservation and digitisation—when resource is perpetually limited—presents an additional layer of mediation, of institutional values reapplied potentially many years after the work was initially accessioned.

In Neely’s assessment of a diffuse situation, she flags a number of obstructive archival tendencies in Scotland including the broad marginalisation of work by artists—leading to a widespread culture of precarious, highly dispersed self-representation amongst practitioners—and a related privileging of narrative features over shorter, more experimental work (2017, pp. 136, 137). Tempting a solution, the article proposes a collaboration between the artists’ moving image support agency LUX Scotland and the NLSMIA as an exchange of expertise and resource respectively, though any such initiative is as yet unfilled.¹² Whilst there remains no specialist collection, however, this research necessarily undertakes an examination of several repositories with overlapping custodial remits. Mirroring the literature, these are, firstly, UK-wide collections of artists’ moving image, in which work from Scotland comprises a proportion; and, secondly, collections of national film and art histories, in which artists’ moving image comprises a proportion.

This first category belongs almost exclusively to LUX, which represents over 1,500 artists (Cook, 2018). LUX’s collection is differentiated from conventional art collections in its mission of distribution, as opposed to preservation, and consequently by the transaction this necessitates: works are not acquired as unique art objects, they are instead represented in a non-exclusive distribution agreement that awards royalties upon each instance of exhibition. Benjamin Cook (2018), director of LUX, has described its collecting criteria, ‘we are looking to represent the breadth and diversity of artists’ moving image practice in the UK both historically and contemporaneously,’ suggesting therein a Scotland-inclusive remit. Despite this egalitarian position, a London-bias characterises the collection, unsurprisingly given the organisation’s predecessors.¹³ Moreover, an accurate recovery of works emanating from Scotland would require access to biographic records which, for many older works, are

¹¹ Commonly used by artists into the mid-1980s.

¹² LUX Scotland’s began a public consultation about the development of a ‘new distribution collection of artists’ moving image based in Scotland’ (LUX Scotland, 2020b) in early 2017 with a series of three discursive events in Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh.

¹³ Summarised in section 0.2.

unpopulated. As a consequence of the organisation's DIY history, its catalogue lacks the rigour of museological counterparts. Nonetheless it is possible to identify at least thirty artists now or previously working in Scotland featured in the online catalogue, ranging from Margaret Tait, through Stansfield/Hooykaas and contemporary artists like Duncan Campbell and Charlotte Prodger.¹⁴ Many of these artists are simultaneously represented in Scottish national art collections, subject therein to a sense of institutional consensus, though outliers—Pictorial Heroes, Butler Brothers, Lesley Keen—offer clues to more neglected voices.

With an entirely distinct mission, REWIND in Dundee exists as an archive of 450 works of British video art from the 1970s and 1980s. Formed via an AHRC-funded research project at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design (DJCAD), REWIND seeks to 'address the gap in historical knowledge of the evolution of electronic media arts in the UK' through a programme of conservation and preservation (REWIND, n.d.). Bookended by two Scottish projects, David Hall's *TV Interruptions* (1971) and *19:4:90 Television Interventions* (1990), the small archive holds a number of works made in Scotland by Pictorial Heroes, Malcolm Dickson, Tamara Krikorian, David Mach, Alistair MacLennan, Bruce McLean, Stephen Partridge and Stansfield/Hooykaas. Amongst these tapes are a variety of documentary media, including a video walkthrough of Krikorian's solo exhibition *An Ephemeral Art* (Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, 1979) and all three editions of *Variant Video* (1988–1989), a video magazine comprising features, interviews and video art pieces. Though REWIND holds a number of insightful works it is also assembled around a relatively narrow form of video expression, largely formalist-leaning, and its community, a significant number of whom were alumni and associates of the college's Television Workshop. Both REWIND and LUX are further mediated by their prioritisation of the single-screen format, a practical decision with repercussions for the under-acknowledgement of live or installation-based work. Whilst these collections both situate work from Scotland within a wider context, they do so via partial accounts of a field which is far more diverse.

In the second category of moving image media archives are Scottish collections of art and film histories whose remit, by accident or design, has intersected with artists' moving image.

¹⁴ Including Doug Aubrey (Pictorial Heroes), Butler Brothers, Duncan Campbell, Anne-Marie Copestake, Lei Cox, Karen Cunningham, Kate Davis, Kathryn Elkin, Sarah Forrest, Luke Fowler, Aurelian Froment, Matt Hulse, Lesley Keen, Wendy Kirkup, Torsten Lauschmann, Duncan Marquiss, Michelle Naismith, Rosalind Nashashibi, Annabel Nicolson, Stephen Partridge, Charlotte Prodger, Daniel Reeves, Margaret Salmon, Lucy Skaer, Stansfield/Hooykaas, Stephen Sutcliffe, Corin Sworn, Alia Syed, Tanya Syed, Margaret Tait and Thomson & Craighead.

The country's contemporary art is represented in dispersed collections including those of National Galleries Scotland (NGS), Glasgow Museums, the former Scottish Arts Council Collection and in smaller numbers amongst Scotland's municipal and university collections. The custody of Scotland's film history, meanwhile, resides squarely with the NLSMIA. Artists' moving image, however, endures a significant underrepresentation upon comparison with the majority holdings of each: the plastic arts of painting and sculpture in the former and social history filmmaking in the latter.

'Responsible for the national collection of Scottish art' (National Galleries Scotland, 2020), for instance, NGS, whose venues include the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (SNGMA), holds around 6,000 artworks in their modern and contemporary collection. This comprises only sixty works of moving image ($\approx 1\%$), with a further eleven co-owned with Tate (Delaney, 2017). The organisation's first moving image acquisition was Glasgow-based Smith/Stewart's two-screen installation *Breathing Space* (1997) in 1998. In 2019 the collection represented twenty-four artists / artist duos of which eighteen have a demonstrable connection to Scotland: Charles Avery (*Untitled (Dihedra)*, 2010–2012); Sana Bilgrami (*Fragments of a Love Story*, 2011); Duncan Campbell (*Bernadette*, 2008); Henry Coombes (*The Bedfords*, 2009); Dalziel + Scullion (*Water Falls Down*, 2001); Katy Dove (*You*, 2003); Graham Fagen (*Missing*, 2011); Luke Fowler (*What You See Is Where You're At*, 2001; *Pilgrimage from Scattered Points*, 2006); Douglas Gordon (*Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait*, 2006); Peter Haining (various, 2000–2009); Calvin Laing (*Calvin & Metro*, 2010); Torsten Lauschmann (*Growing Zeros (Digital Clock)*, 2010); Rachel Maclean (*Feed Me*, 2015); Bruce McLean (*Soup (A Concept Consomme)*, 2010); Rosalind Nashashibi (*Midwest*, 2002; *University Library*, 2004); Nashashibi/Skaer (*Flash in the Metropolitan*, 2006); and Stansfield/Hooykaas (*Running Time*, 1979) (Meehan, 2019).

Glasgow Museums, whose primary contemporary art venue is the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), holds around 2,000 art objects dating from 1960 to present (Glasgow Life, 2020). Works of moving image constitute just forty of these ($\approx 2\%$), representing twenty-seven artists / artist duos of whom eighteen are or have been Scotland-based (Bruce, 2019). In their 2008 acquisitions policy, Glasgow Museums' parent organisation, Culture and Sport Glasgow (CSG) (2008, p. 8) now trading as Glasgow Life, stated:

CSG aims to collect fine and decorative art objects on behalf of the Council which primarily reflect the development of these arts in Scotland, particularly the west of

Scotland, and with lesser emphasis on British and world contexts. There is particular stress on the works of living Scottish artists in all media.

Despite prioritising recent work, with an implied openness to non-traditional media, the document specifies particular concerns in the collecting of painting, sculpture and photography, without explicit mention of film or video. The collection's first moving image acquisition wasn't until Roderick Buchanan's *Gobstopper* (1999) in 2003, earlier awarded the inaugural Beck's Futures Prize 2000. The collecting of film and video-based work has since been relatively consistent, manifesting a corrective ethic in the acquisition of overlooked historic and recent work. As of 2019, artists represented include: Beagles and Ramsay (*We Are The People - Suck On This*, 1999–2000; *New Meat*, 2004); Roderick Buchanan (*Sodastream*, 1997; *Gobstopper*, 1999; *I Am Here*, 2007); Alan Currall (*Word Processing*, 1995; *Jetsam*, 1995; *Message to my best friend*, 2000); Jacqueline Donachie (*Pose Work for Sisters*, 2016); Katy Dove (*Motorhead*, 2002; *Luna*, 2004; *Stop It*, 2006; *Sooner*, 2007); Graham Fagen and Holger Mohaupt (*Downpresser*, 2007); Sarah Forrest (*That Now*, 2013; *The Pot*, 2015); Douglas Gordon (*A moment's silence (for someone close to you)*, 1998; *Pretty much every film and video work from about 1992 until now*, 2014); Ilana Halperin (*Center for Short Lived Phenomena (1973/2005)*, 2005); Winnie Herbstein (*Studwork*, 2018); Torsten Lauschmann (*The Devil Cannot Read My Mind*, 2008); Hardeep Pandhal (*Self-Loathing Flashmob*, 2018); Charlotte Prodger (*BRIDGIT*, 2016); Sïan Robinson (*Conversations*, 2016); David Sherry (*Running for a Tram*, 2010); David Shrigley (*New Friends*, 2006; *The Door*, 2007); Stephen Sutcliffe (*Come to the Edge*, 2003; *Despair*, 2009; *Plum*, 2012); and Corin Sworn (*Faktura*, 2008) (Bruce, 2019).

A collections policy founded on national representation also characterises the former Scottish Arts Council Collection. In 1984, its General Purchasing Policy was revised, articulating its first priority as the purchase of:

The best possible examples of contemporary Scottish art, as a means of support to artists and for the benefit of the public through the picture rental scheme which aims to make available a wide range of the best possible, [sic] contemporary Scottish art to the public areas where one wouldn't normally expect to see art. (Scottish Arts Council, 1984)

Here, *Scottish* is defined as 'work produced by artists who have been living and working in Scotland for one year prior to the date of purchase' and *contemporary* describes work completed within 'a two-year period prior to the date of purchase' (Scottish Arts Council, 1984). Notably, the collection sought to privilege financial support for working artists over a

historicising acquisitions practice that would aspire to ‘fill gaps in the Collection’ (Scottish Arts Council, 1984). Acquiring over 2,000 works across forty years, the SAC Collection was dissolved and gifted to museums, galleries and other public bodies between 1996 and 1998, though its inventory provides a useful snapshot of institutional attitudes to the moving image (Scottish Arts Council, 1996). While the 1984 policy does name video among its considered artforms, it wasn’t until 1993 that the collection acquired its first work, Daniel Reeves’ *Obsessive Becoming* (1990–1995), later gifted to the Highland Council (Scottish Arts Council, 1994a; Creative Scotland, 2011). Prior to the collection’s dissolution, only a further two videos were acquired: Roderick Buchanan’s *Notes on Pronunciation* (1998), gifted to Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums in 2011, and Ross Sinclair’s *The Sound of Young Scotland Part 2 Volume 1* (1998), now marked missing (Creative Scotland, 2011). Interestingly, there is no crossover between works collected by the SAC and works produced via SAC commissioning schemes.

Across Scotland’s three national collections—with the exception of Stansfield/Hooykaas’ early video *Running Time* (1979), gifted to NGS by the artists in 2014—combined holdings represent only the last three decades of practice via a sample that is too small to adequately represent the breadth of moving image practices. Without the same nationwide ambit, smaller civic collections only slightly augment this survey. As of 2019, Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums hold eleven works of moving image, corroborating an institutional consensus via works by Roderick Buchanan (as above, *Notes on Pronunciation*, 1998); Henry Coombes (*Gralloch*, 2008); Dalziel + Scullion (*Another Place*, 2000); Torsten Lauschmann (*Pandora’s Ball*, 2008); and Rachel Maclean (*The Lion and the Unicorn*, 2014) (Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums, 2020). The University of Edinburgh Art Collection holds another eleven works largely with the prerogative of representing its Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) alumni, including Rachel Maclean, or with a research-based connection to the university (Delaney, 2019). Amongst regional collections the dispersal of artists’ moving image is largely anomalous, an effect of specific circumstance rather than active policy, examples of which might include The McManus, Dundee, which holds work by Duncan Marquiss, Matt Stokes and Pernille Spence (The McManus, n.d.) or The Pier Art Centre, Stromness, which holds twelve films by Margaret Tait (The Pier Arts Centre, n.d.). Across these collections no concerted strategy can readily be identified and whilst the rate of acquisition of moving image work has increased, significant omissions of artistic communities and movements persist.

Moving image in the art collection is also delimited by certain material expectations. As Erika Balsom (2013c, p. 114) explains:

Many museums [...] will collect only editioned artworks—which means that the limited edition is not simply a way of cashing in but also a way of ensuring that the artwork will be amenable to institutional structures that participate in the writing of art's histories.

In this way, only film and video which can be reconciled as unique—therein collectible—art objects are apposite for acquisition, leaving a large number of practitioners excluded by default. In the film archive, by contrast, artists' moving image enjoys an entirely different kind of representation. In the collection of the NLSMIA, the practice's occurrence is less a product of targeted acquisition and more a reflection of the overlapping organisational histories which the archive has inherited responsibility for. In particular, the diffuse collection of artists' work functions by proxy as a record of historic commissioning activity.

The NLSMIA was first established as a project to reconcile the Scottish Film Council's collection of films, forming the Scottish Film Archive in 1976. In 1997, a merger of the SFC, SFPPF, Scottish Screen Locations and Scottish Broadcast and Film Training Trust formed Scottish Screen, significantly growing the collection, then renamed the Scottish Screen Archive. After further centralisation, Scottish Screen and the SAC merged to form Creative Scotland in 2010, shifting the administration of the Scottish Screen Archive to the National Library of Scotland and initiating a rebrand in 2015 as the NLSMIA. The archive holds over 46,000 items, the majority of which represent filmmaking that performs a documentary, educational, or industrial function (National Library of Scotland, n.d.-b). These are contained in a range of formats—16mm, 35mm, U-Matic, Betacam, VHS and DVD—some of which have restricted access dictated by playback equipment and material condition.

Despite its social history focus, a number of significant production companies who spanned sponsored documentary and experimental forms are represented in the collection including Pelicula Films (Mike Alexander and Mark Littlewood), Ogam Films (Oscar Marzaroli, Allan Singleton and Martin Singleton) and Ancona Films (Margaret Tait).¹⁵ Making subsidised magazine-style profiles on subjects ranging from power plants and motorway infrastructure to local interest and tourism-led pieces, these companies also developed avant-garde passion

¹⁵ Additional Ogam Films productions including *Le Grand Magic Circus: Once Upon a Time* (1973) can be found in Glasgow Caledonian University's recently accessioned Oscar Marzaroli Archive.

projects, contributing to an emerging independent film culture through SAC programmes in the 1970s.¹⁶ Amongst the NLSMIA's most useful material, however, are video documents of the SAC's own activities in curating moving image including televised features on landmark exhibitions like *Locations Edinburgh* (1971, T0829) and *Open Circuit* (1973, T2271). These organisational histories are also represented through the NLSMIA's acquisition of commissions produced via schemes like First Reels (1991–1999) and Cineworks (1999–2007), developed by the SFC / Scottish Screen in partnership with broadcasters. These include Matt Hulse's *Wee Three* (1998, 7070), *Hotel Central* (2000, 7796), *Harrachov* (2006, 7907); Mandy McIntosh's *Eagle Eye* (1997, 7986), *I Am Boy* (2000, 7848) and *Oompie Ka Doompie* (2006, 7619); Gillian Steel's *Chemicals and Illuminants* (1993, 9127); and Sarah Tripp's *Two Days in Spring* (1997, 7841), *Testatika* (2001, 7866) and *Me & Her* (2006, 7612). A more irregular selection of standalone SAC-subsidised works includes Henry Coombes' *Laddy and The Lady* (2006, 7688), *The Bedfords* (2008, 8117) and Duncan Marquiss's *The Clay Wall* (2007, 7966). These collections aren't comprehensive and don't cleanly testify to a coherent archival strategy but do usefully reflect a history of public subsidy and the character of work it instructed. The NLSMIA's diffuse collection of artists' moving image omits two significant periods: work completed in the 1980s is conspicuously absent, whilst virtually no artistic material is represented from the last fifteen years.

1.3.2 Archives of documentation

As we have seen, archives and collections of moving image media in Scotland tend to better reflect the collecting institution's own activities, history and values than offer a national survey of practice. The effective recovery of wider narratives, therefore, necessarily draws upon additional material in the form of paper holdings. Like media archives, paper repositories are widely dispersed in Scotland, each with remits that intersect only tangentially with my focus. They primarily comprise the inherited records of administrative bodies or individuals and in doing so instruct a point of entry via these entities and their interaction with artists' moving image. Though a separate handful of specialist archives—organised instead by topic—also exist in REWIND, the British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection (BAFVSC) and the Film & Video Distribution Database (FVDD), they have tended to ratify existent historiography in their London weighting. The following section

¹⁶ Including *Glasgow Film Makers* (Scottish Arts Council's Glasgow Centre, 27 May 1973) and *Independent Scottish Film Makers* (Scottish Arts Council Gallery, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, 4–11 December 1977).

attempts to summarise these documents, mapping some of the foundational sources to which my research is indebted.

A central agent in the curation, commissioning and development of artists' moving image in Scotland, the Scottish Arts Council provides a useful lead in historical recovery. Its activities, unconsolidated, are recorded in parts by dispersed holdings at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh. Across its archive and library, SNGMA holds the most comprehensive collection of SAC exhibition catalogues for film and video projects including *Locations Edinburgh* (1971), *Open Circuit* (SAC Gallery, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, 1973), *Open Cinema* (SAC Gallery, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, 1976) and *Tamara Krikorian: Eye to Eye* (Fruit Market Gallery, Edinburgh, 1979). SNGMA also holds a dossier of artist biographies, representing artists including Mark Boyle, Stephen Partridge and Elsa Stansfield (GMA A49/1), and papers of the SAC Collection including inventories, purchasing policies and correspondence relating to its 1996 dissolution (GMA A49/2). The NRS, meanwhile, records the political life of the SAC, comprising correspondence with civil servants and politicians, minutes, official reports and charters. Amongst these are key documents on the SAC Film and Video Committee and Scottish Film Production Committee (1979–1982, SAC1/15), the defunding of the Richard Demarco Gallery (ED61/99), and closure of its Charlotte Square gallery (ED61/99). Online, the NRS has also archived the defunct SAC website, preserving details of all grant awardees between April 2001 and June 2010 (Scottish Arts Council, 2010). Whilst SAC material is rather fragmentary, these records offer important evidence of the public body and the extent of its omnipotence in Scotland.

This history is affirmed and expanded upon by The Glasgow Miracle: Materials for Alternative Histories archive, responsible for the organisational records of the SAC's Glasgow Centre at Blythswood Square (1967–1975), the Third Eye Centre (TEC, 1975–1991) and its successor the Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA, 1992–), which in combination have occupied a continuous and central role in supporting contemporary art practice in Glasgow. Based at the CCA, the archive forms the outcome of a namesake AHRC-funded project at The Glasgow School of Art, led by CCA director Francis McKee between 2012 and 2014.¹⁷ This sought to 'make accessible the materials needed for study of

¹⁷ *The Glasgow Miracle - New evidence and insight*. Funded value: £122,501; principal investigator: Francis McKee; co-investigator: Ross Sinclair; project reference: AH/J00250X/1 (February 2012–July 2013).

the Glasgow art scene over the past forty years in order to further the academic understanding of the city's art infrastructure at a crucial time' (The Glasgow School of Art, n.d.). Describing the emergence of a moving image culture in Scotland, the archive evidences screenings of experimental 16mm work at the Glasgow Centre in 1973, though is particularly comprehensive throughout the tenure of the TEC's founding director Tom McGrath (1974–1977), comprising notes, correspondence and press releases from a period inclusive of the landmark exhibition *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* (1976). A number of subsequent projects are represented through ephemera including *Unpacking 7 Films* (TEC, 1980), *The Alternative Screen* (TEC, 1980) and the exhibition and broadcast scheme *19:4:90 Television Interventions* (TEC, 1990). Concurrent with the TEC's liquidation and the digital turn, after around 1991 holdings are less extensive, represented primarily by published catalogues and thereby expressing less of an organisational context.

These archives, skewed by the historical *a priori* of unknowable provenance and tacit agendas, cannot describe a complete picture alone. In order to develop a more robust, polyvocal account, this research also consults contemporaneous arts reporting in order to both reconcile an accurate chronology in the pre-digital era and to measure critical opinion. Art criticism in Scotland has been propagated by relatively few writers, allowing this research to ingest a significant portion of reportage through the papers of two key figures represented by The Glasgow School of Art Archives: Cordelia Oliver (The George and Cordelia Oliver Archive, DC 066) and Clare Henry (Papers of Clare Henry, DC 030). Oliver wrote prolifically on art and theatre in Scotland, producing two or three articles per week between 1959 and 1999 largely published in *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *The Glasgow Herald*. Between reviews and opinion columns, this body of work narrates, quite comprehensively, a long period of cultural development. Reviews of video art and installation-based exhibitions provide a rich first-hand account of these activities where description lacks amongst institutional documentation. Though certain events are overlooked, inattention also suggests something of the public understanding and value, or lack thereof, granted to moving image.¹⁸

Clare Henry's papers meanwhile cover the period between 1981 and 2007, comprising draft articles published in *The Glasgow Herald* (to 1992) / *The Herald* (1992–) and essays for *ArtReview* and *Museums Journal*. Henry's writing is exclusively concerned with visual art and is attendant to conceptual practices, covering artist-led activity alongside mainstream

¹⁸ Coverage of *Open Circuit* (1973) and *Open Cinema* (1976), for instance, is conspicuously absent.

programming, but on numerous occasions expresses a polemical discontent for video art. In this way, her archive offers a useful barometer for certain reactionary views. In addition to these sources, the fully searchable online archive of the cultural magazine *The List* (1985–), covering activity across Scotland through comprehensive listings and journalism, has provided an essential resource in corroborating specifics, aiding the empirical rigour of this research (*The List*, n.d.).

A limited account of Scotland-based activity is also recoverable from the holdings of specialist repositories dealing explicitly with artists' moving image and its antecedents. Alongside its video archive, REWIND holds an uncatalogued collection of supplementary paper material including catalogues for exhibitions like *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* (TEC, 1976) and *Tamara Krikorian: Eye to Eye* (Fruit Market Gallery, 1979) alongside posters, ephemera and programme notes for a number of touring packages produced by Field & Frames Productions: *Semblances* (c.1992), *Passages* (c.1993) and *Animation* (c.1993). Online, the REWIND website hosts many more digitised assets including correspondence, programme notes and papers relating to the Television Workshop (REWIND, 2021).

Outwith Scotland, the British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection (BAFVSC) at Central Saint Martins, London, comprises film and video works alongside publications, ephemera and photography in hard copy and digital formats, catalogued online (University of the Arts London, n.d.). Founded in 2000 by David Curtis, the archive holds selected material on some relevant exhibitions and festivals, though these are inconsistent and easier gleaned from organisers.¹⁹ An AHRC-funded collaboration between the BAFVSC and University of Sunderland (2002–2005), the Film & Video Distribution Database (FVDD), meanwhile, has collected materials with a focus on 'the distribution and promotion of artists' and independent film and video in the UK' (Film & Video Distribution Database, n.d.). Despite this broad intention, the distributors it represents are exclusively London-based.²⁰ Whilst these have relatively limited direct impact on the Scottish context, the FVDD's digitised collection of 815 documents also covers the Arts Council of Great Britain's Artists' Film and Video Committee, involved by degrees in the *International Forum on the Avant-Garde* (1976) at

¹⁹ Including *V-Topia* (Tramway, Glasgow, 1994, BAFV.6494); *New Visions* (Glasgow, 1992–1996, BAFV.13792, BAFV.13795, BAFV.13796); *Kill Your Timid Notion*, Dundee (2007, BAFV.5824); and *Diversions*, Edinburgh (2009, BAFV.7923).

²⁰ London Film-Makers' Co-op, The Other Cinema, London Video Arts, Cinema of Women, Circles, Film and Video Umbrella, Cinenova, London Electronic Arts and LUX.

Edinburgh International Film Festival and in touring initiatives which reached the TEC and Glasgow Film Theatre. By and large, however, the materials held by the BAFVSC and FVDD evidence the extent to which organisations with ostensibly UK-wide scopes have historically neglected activity beyond London.

Whilst the archives and collections detailed here hold a cumulative wealth of material that offers a means of establishing new historical narratives, this research has also identified key deficiencies between them. Understanding that artists' moving image in Scotland occupies a marginal position, an analysis of holdings determines two further concentrations where this marginalisation is manifold. Firstly, compound factors have contributed to a scarcity of documentation represented the contemporary period, after c.1990. These might include the paradigm shift in communication brought by the digital age, to the effect of dematerialising and disappearing correspondence, reports and minutes. At the same moment, in Scotland, the predomination of new institutions like Tramway (1990–), GoMA (1996–) and a number of artist-run spaces—few, if any, of whom maintain an archive—has cultivated a pronounced dearth of material. Secondly, across my period of focus are omissions of material representing the activities of marginalised social groups—women, the LGBTQIA+ community or ethnic minorities. If archives corroborate existing historicisation, they might also be imprinted upon by historic social attitudes and, resultantly, recycle those oppressions. In an address to these identified gaps and in order to bolster polyvocality amongst its source material, this thesis employs a second key research method in the generation of a new set of oral history interviews with artists, filmmakers and organisers whose selection directly addresses not only the marginalisation of a practice, but the compound marginalisation of these particular gaps.

1.4 On oral histories

In his article ‘Excluding Archival Silences: Oral History and Historical Absence,’ archivist Ben Alexander (2006, p. 2) argues that ‘all cultural artifacts are marked by historical silences that are inherent to their very materiality.’ That is, the archive anticipates a significant loss produced by the physical limitations of its holdings: most history does not produce records, ‘most history is lost as it occurs’ (Alexander, 2006, p. 11). Through the case study of an artists’ colony in upstate New York, however, Alexander (2006, p. 11) demonstrates how the interplay of material evidence and personal, oral reflection offered a means of ‘filling in the vacant historical spaces that surrounded all of material history.’ He resolves that, with universal applicability, ‘the fluidity of oral reflection is especially suited to expanding the cultural insights contained in material records’ (Alexander, 2006, p. 10). In the synthesis of these two research methods, the production of accurate historical accounts with fewer absences might then be promised. For the relatively contemporary field of artists’ moving image in Scotland—whose subjects are living and accessible in many instances—oral histories provide a complimentary means of corroborating material evidence and exposing additional hidden narratives to the effect of enhancing the rigour of this research.

Historian Lynn Abrams’ cornerstone book *Oral History Theory* (2016) provides a useful introduction to the eponymous ‘practice [and] method of research’ (2016, p. 12) before situating it as it relates to and manifests a number of contemporary theoretical methodologies. Oral history, she explains, is differentiated from other forms of interview-based qualitative research through ‘the distinctive character of specifically engaging with the past’ (2016, p. 14). As a means of generating new historical sources—where evidentiary deficiencies might otherwise exist—the practice of oral history is uniquely equipped to unearth undocumented, informal or anti-institutional cultures. By the 1980s, Abrams (2016, p. 15) notes, the practice had garnered a liberationist politic as the method of choice ‘amongst scholars of the twentieth century seeking to uncover the experiences of a number of groups who had traditionally been disregarded by conventional histories.’ In such applications, the oral history has been implemented as ‘recovery history,’ providing evidence ‘about past events which could not be retrieved from conventional historical sources, usually written ones’ (2016, p. 16). In mapping a historically marginalised field like artists’ moving image in Scotland, this promise of retrieval and reconstruction proffers an apt means of fulfilling historical-revisionist objectives.

Abrams is right to note, however, that ‘the claim that oral history is in itself empowering for the respondents must not be accepted uncritically’ (2016, p. 160). The oral history cannot ever fully represent the interviewee and is a practice itself mediated by invisible conditions which shape the content of the interview itself, processes of transcription and interpretation thereafter. Abrams (2016, p. 85) proposes that the oral history interview is ‘a three-way conversation: the interviewee engages in a conversation with his or herself, with the interviewer and with culture.’ With each of these dialogues influencing each other, the task of decoding these complex subjectivities in pursuit of objective fact is largely impracticable. However, as Paul Thompson (2016, p. 53) notes in his foundational text *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (1978), ‘insisting only on the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake,’ is too often an obstruction to the essentially social purpose of history. That is, the discipline is fundamentally underpinned by the educational function it provides society, which should not be impeded by an obsessive campaign of fact-finding. This educational function is the grounds for most historical research despite the camouflage of ‘scholarly standards’; the oral history, Thompson (2016, p. 56) suggests, simply makes history’s social purpose explicit.

A binary could be inferred here between the objectives of factual accuracy and social purpose, channelled via archival and oral research methods respectively. However, the proposition that archival statements are superior carriers of fact must be challenged: ‘all evidence,’ we are reminded by Abrams, ‘is socially constructed, all is a product of purpose’ (2016, p. 89). Each statement is designed to cultivate a desired impression: the exhibition catalogue smooths over blemishes, art reviews trade precision for lyricism, even the report selects data to appease its stakeholders. It is also important to contest the implication of a strict separation between archival and oral research methods. Thompson (2016, p. 56) has written that the interview provides a ‘means of discovering written documents and photographs which would not have otherwise been traced.’ In several instances this thesis has benefitted profoundly from such personal materials, verifying, augmenting and expanding my account.²¹ To satisfy the objective of factual accuracy, the design of my oral history technique is *dialogic*, inviting participants to revise their transcripts at will. This certifies my transcription of empirical data—names, dates, locations—whilst stimulating ongoing conversations, which have, often over months, yielded the rediscovery of memories and materials. Contrary to the conventional verbatim transcription, I hope to manifest what

²¹ Particularly via the materials supplied by Malcolm Dickson, Charles Esche, Lesley Keen, Kim Knowles, and Lucy McKenzie.

Abrams (2016, p. 172) deems ‘a shared authority praxis’ which awards interviewees greater agency in the pursuit of faithful representation with the intended social effect of advocacy.

Concerns around the veracity of oral history interviews have also been founded on a mistrust of memory. Editors of *The Oral History Reader* (2016), Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (2016, p. 17) remark that ‘historians have been notoriously wary of memory as a historical source.’ Memory is liable to coercion and corruption and, as film historian Annette Kuhn (2007, p. 264) writes, ‘is neither pure experience nor pure event. Memory is an account, always discursive, always already textual.’ Memory, Abrams (2016, p. 88) explains, ‘exists in symbiotic relationship with the public memorialisation of the past.’ That is, it unconsciously responds to dominant historical narratives. In application to my interview set this emerges perhaps most readily in respondents’ positioning of themselves as outsiders to dominant narratives, either those of universal signification, such as the campaign of feminism, or localised cultural mythologies, such as the much-contested Glasgow Miracle. Whilst memory isn’t necessarily a measure of the past, it contains ‘truth value’ for the interviewee (Abrams, 2016, p. 88). I share the view that in lieu of absolute veracity, the oral history—like a text—actively participates in historicisation, establishing productive analyses of position and opinion alongside a summary of activities.

The oral history interview has a particular significance for moving image research. In the introduction to a special issue of *Film History*, Richard Koszarski (2000, p. 3) notes that, the ‘earliest histories of film were heavily dependent on first person testimony’ and although ‘fresh new layers of documentary materials [...] swung the research pendulum back towards the archives at the end of the 1960s,’ methodologies developed in the 1970s have secured oral history’s position within film scholarship. The method’s capacity to capture the layered ecology of a culture is stressed throughout the issue, offering models for approaches in interviews with filmmakers like Charles L. Turner, who illuminates the infrastructure of New York’s independent film scene (c.1930–1950) (Magliozzi and Turner, 2000). For non-commercial, marginal forms of moving image production and exhibition, the oral history proves an efficient mode of recovery. Academic Dwight Swanson (2010), for instance, has used the practice to uncover the underexplored phenomenon of *itinerant filmmaking* in the United States, whilst in Scotland, Sarah Neely (2020) has recently used interview in an historicisation of the Highlands and Islands Film Guild (1946–1971).

1.4.1 Interviewees

Selected on the basis of their involvement with artists' moving image in Scotland, the fifteen named artists, filmmakers and organisers interviewed for this research represent a variety of positions on the field, speaking to either, and often both of the two gaps identified amongst archival statements—representing the contemporary period, post-1990, or of an identity marginalised by societal oppressions. This new dataset comprises conversations, each between fifty minutes and two hours, with Sam Ainsley, Malcolm Dickson, Charles Esche, Barry Esson and Bryony McIntyre, Luke Fowler, Lesley Keen, Kim Knowles, Mason Leaver-Yap, Lucy McKenzie, Stephanie Smith, Gillian Steel, Alia Syed, Sarah Tripp, and Ann Vance. Constructed from our conversations, the following abridged biographies plot their oppositional and overlapping positions on the production and promotion of artists' moving image in Scotland.

Sam Ainsley is an artist and educator based in Glasgow. In 1981 she began teaching in the department of Murals and Stained Glass at The Glasgow School of Art. In 1985, the department was restructured and renamed Environmental Art by David Harding. As a duo, they delivered this experimental undergraduate programme until 1991, coordinating film and video workshops and screenings for a student cohort including Douglas Gordon, Christine Borland, Ross Sinclair and Roderick Buchanan. Ainsley then founded the renowned Master of Fine Art programme, which she led until 2005, and was key to the establishment of the school's technology resource, the Electronic Media Studio in 1992.

Malcolm Dickson is the director of Street Level Photoworks. Dickson was a member of the second Transmission committee (1985–1987) where he co-organised the serial exhibition and events programme, EventSpace, later constituted as an autonomous organisation of the same name. Dickson co-founded then edited the political arts magazine *Variant* from 1987 to 1994, during which time he undertook a postgraduate diploma in Electronic Imaging at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art (1988–1989) where he produced three editions of *Variant Video* (1988–1989), a videotape anthology of video art, interviews and documentary profiles. With EventSpace, Dickson co-curated projects including *Sites/Positions* (1990) and the first two editions (1992, 1994) of the biennial New Visions festival, a significant forum for artists' film and video practices in Glasgow. Dickson continues to reappraise the history of video in Scotland through writing and curation, contributing chapters to REWIND publications and via the survey exhibition *Lost and Found* (2010).

Charles Esche was the Visual Arts Director of Tramway, Glasgow, 1993–1997, a tenure which included significant presentations of moving image in exhibitions *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), *V-Topia* (1994), *Trust* (1995), *Instant* (1996) and *Film Culture* (1997). Upon leaving Tramway, he co-founded the journal *Afterall* (1997–), established the alternative education programme Protoacademy at the Edinburgh College of Art (1997–2002), and set up The Modern Institute (1997–), Glasgow, with Toby Webster and Will Bradley. He curated Liverpool’s Video Positive festival in 1997 and the related International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA) in 1998. Although he maintains residence in Scotland, Esche left its professional sphere in 2000 and is currently Director of the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven.

Barry Esson and Bryony McIntyre are co-directors of Arika, a political arts organisation dealing with issues of social justice. In 2001, Esson co-founded Instal (2001–2010) at The Arches, Glasgow, a festival of experimental music and sound art. Upon an invitation to deliver something likeminded for the newly opened Dundee Contemporary Arts, Esson and McIntyre developed Kill Your Timid Notion (KYTN, 2003–2010). An annual festival, KYTN combined its organisers’ respective interests in experimental sound and film histories becoming a key node in an emerging structural film revival outside of London. The festival staged expanded cinema events with artists like Luke Fowler, Sachiko M, Lis Rhodes and Tony Conrad, often in new collaborations. In 2006, they founded Arika as an events production company and in 2010 restructured their programming as a series of Episodes, multidisciplinary fora organised around thematic enquiries.

Luke Fowler is an artist, filmmaker and musician born and now based in Glasgow. Fowler studied Printmaking at DJCAD, graduating in 2000. That year, he established the record label Shadazz which brought together experimental music and moving image, producing the videotape compilation *Evil Eye is Source* in 2002. Fowler completed his first moving image work in 2001 (*What You See Is Where You’re At*), establishing a characteristic approach to experimental documentary portraiture developed through works including *Pilgrimage from Scattered Points* (2006), *Bogman Palmjaguar* (2008) and *All Divided Selves* (2011)—which gained him a 2012 Turner Prize nomination. Fowler has navigated Scotland’s experimental film culture for two decades and shown extensively across international gallery and cinema contexts. He has written about moving image for *MAP* and was a member of the first LUX Scotland Advisory Board.

Lesley Keen is an experimental animator based in Glasgow. Keen studied Graphic Design at GSA, graduating in 1975, before being awarded a British Council scholarship to train in animation at Barrandov Studios in Prague, then part of communist Czechoslovakia. Keen established the production company Persistent Vision—then Scotland’s only animation studio—and was supported by the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Film Production Fund to co-produce short films broadcast on Channel 4 including *Taking a Line for a Walk* (1983) and *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1984). Keen’s five-year project, *Ra: The Path of the Sun God* (1990) premiered at Edinburgh International Film Festival in 1990 and is arguably the first feature film directed by a woman in Scotland, broadcast later that year in three parts on Channel 4 and exhibited at Tramway as part of the European City of Culture 1990 programme.

Kim Knowles is a lecturer at Aberystwyth University and programmer of EIFF’s *Black Box* experimental strand. Knowles undertook a PhD on the avant-garde film work of Man Ray at the University of Edinburgh between 2004 and 2007, during which time she lived in Paris and was exposed to experimental programming. Settling in Edinburgh to undertake a fixed-term academic post with access to research development funding, Knowles established her own Diversions Film Festival, Edinburgh (2008–2009). At the same time, she began consulting on EIFF’s *Black Box* strand and by 2009 had become its official programmer. Despite leaving Scotland the same year to pursue academic work, she continues to curate for EIFF annually. Her research has been concerned with the materiality of film, film culture, and more recently with the avant-garde history of EIFF in the 1970s.

Mason Leaver-Yap is a producer based between Glasgow and Berlin. They work with artists and organisations to create public exhibitions, publications and events, specialising in the commissioning of artists’ moving image work. Leaver-Yap began working for *MAP* in 2005 and first programmed moving image work for its issue launches. Following curatorial positions at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, and time in New York, Leaver-Yap moved to Glasgow in 2013, revisiting conversations with LUX director Benjamin Cook about the formation of a dedicated agency for artists’ moving image in Scotland. With pilot funding secured, Leaver-Yap co-founded LUX Scotland in 2014, serving as the organisation’s first director until 2016. Subsequent roles with the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, KW Institute, Berlin, and Scotland + Venice have seen them pursue more production-centred roles, working with artists including Charlotte Prodger and Jamie Crewe.

Lucy McKenzie is an artist based in Brussels. McKenzie was born in Glasgow and studied for her BA at DJCAD from 1995–1999 before returning to Glasgow where she worked until 2006. On graduating, McKenzie won the EAST Award at EASTinternational, Norwich, in 1999 and found gallery representation with Cabinet, London. Supported early on by Fuse (1992–1999), a registered Employment Action Scheme for artists, McKenzie was able to undertake varied creative endeavours. Alongside a painting-based artistic practice, she played in a number of bands, ran the Decemberism record label and was a founding member of Flourish Studios, whose studio holders organised a DIY programme of moving image, performance and music, Flourish Nights (2001–2003). McKenzie’s programming featured film and video by artists including Duncan Campbell, Luke Fowler, Bonnie Camplin, Cerith Wyn Evans and Cosey Fanni Tutti.

Stephanie Smith is one half of the Anglo-Irish artist duo Smith/Stewart, based in Glasgow since 1994. Smith undertook a BA in Fine Art at the Slade School of Art (1987–1991), before moving to the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam (1991–1993), where she met collaborator Eddie Stewart. They made their first video work together in 1993 (*Intercourse*), though Smith maintained a solo text- and video-based practice until 1995—also winning the EAST Award in 1994. Smith/Stewart have been supported by exhibitions at Tramway (*Dark Lights*, 1995), Fruitmarket Gallery (*Hooded.Bared*, 1998) and Inverleith House (*Enter Love and Enter Death*, 2007–2008), and have been included in international surveys of video art including *X/Y: Jeunes artistes, Nouveaux médias* (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1995) and *Seeing Time* (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1999–2000).

Gillian Steel is an artist and educator. From a background in textile design, she joined the Transmission committee (1987–1991) and developed collaborative film projects like *Animate Her* (1990) for *Sites/Positions*. Steel undertook the postgraduate diploma in Electronic Imaging at DJCA and was commissioned by the First Reels scheme to make *Chemicals and Illuminants* (1993) and *A Currency for the Superstitious* (1995). She screened regularly at New Visions and developed the film installation *Remarkable Pages* (1994) for its 1994 edition. Steel was coordinator for Castlemilk Video Workshop and has delivered participatory projects for ASL schools, prisons and art schools.

Alia Syed is an experimental filmmaker who grew up in Glasgow before moving to London where she studied film at the University of East London (1984–1987). Amidst the Greenham Common protests and 1984 miner’s strike, Syed became active in the feminist movement and

joined the London Film-Makers' Co-op, where she was employed to process black and white film. She undertook postgraduate study at the Slade School of Art (1991–1992) and in her thirty-year career since has been shortlisted for the Jarman Award (2015) and Paul Hamlyn Award (2020). Syed participated in HERTAKE International Women's Film Festival (1990), part of Glasgow's European City of Culture 1990 programme, and had a solo exhibition, *Jigar*, at the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, in 2002.

Sarah Tripp is an artist, writer and lecturer based in Glasgow. Whilst still a student at GSA, she was commissioned by the First Reels scheme to make her short film *Weather Vain* (1993). Following an MA at Chelsea College of Art and Design, Tripp joined the Transmission committee, producing another work via First Reels, *Two Days in Spring* (1997). Spanning artists' moving image, documentary and short narrative drama, subsequent works have included *Anti-Prophet* (1999), *Testatika* (2001) and *Me & Her* (2006).

Ann Vance is an artist based in Glasgow. She studied drawing and painting to postgraduate level at GSA (1983–1986, 1987–1988). Disillusioned with the dominance of figuration at that time, she borrowed a Super 8 camera and began working with film. After graduating, she joined the Transmission committee (1988–1989), then moved to Amsterdam to study at the Rijksakademie (1989–1992), becoming involved with film and video exhibition there, where she had a solo show at Time Based Arts. Returning to Glasgow in 1992, Vance supported the first New Visions festival and acted as co-organiser in its two subsequent editions (1994, 1996). In this period Vance became a prolific programmer and wrote on the film and video scene for *Variant*.

Amongst these practitioners an extraordinary breadth of experience supplies this research with first-hand insight and expertise, enhancing and augmenting the scaffolding found in archival statements. It is hoped that in the four chapters which follow, these collected materials are represented faithfully and with an ethic of advocacy, forming the foundation of a cogent and corrective historical narrative which appropriately preserves complexity and dissent; that the methodological framework and its implementation described heretofore give way to concerted and valuable engagement with artists' moving image and its progenitors in their continuously unfolding context.

Chapter Two: 1970–1979

2.1 Prehistories for avant-garde film practice

The conditions of antecedent avant-garde film production seep into the character and concern of moving image practices in Scotland long thereafter. Whilst a focused timeframe allows layers of discussion to cohere, few hard edges exist—as Alexander Alberro (2008, p. 69) reminds us, ‘the real power of any periodising concept is heuristic, enabling us to see the familiar in new and productive ways.’ Though 1970 offers an optimal point of entry for compound political, infrastructural and technological factors, laid out hereafter, the development of earlier avant-garde film cultures in Scotland bear an enduring influence which, briefly surveyed here, introduce many of the refrains that underwrite this history.

2.1.1 The documentary and its discontents, 1930–1960

In a country lacking an established history of commercial filmmaking or studio system, an alternative film culture perhaps forms less as a political or aesthetic opposition to narrative drama and more in response to its strongest vernacular tradition, the documentary. Coined by Scottish filmmaker and critic John Grierson, the *documentary* had, from its inception, been used to record the social life of Scotland (Deacon, 2005, p. 151). In his treatise, ‘First Principles of Documentary’ (1932–1934), Grierson (1976, p. 20) articulated its form as a departure from newsreel, educational or scientific filmmaking, passing from ‘descriptions of natural material, to arrangements, rearrangements, and creative shapings of it.’ The documentary found significant support and by the late 1930s occupied a dominant position amongst Scottish film production. Where little infrastructure attended to drama, the documentary, in its appeal to industry, found organisational proponents in the Scottish Educational Film Association (SEFA, 1935–1962) and the first Films of Scotland Committee (FSC, 1938) (Petrie, 2000a).

During this first filmmaking boom, prior to the caesura of WWII, one notable challenge to the model industrial sponsorship can be found in The Glasgow School of Art’s Kinecraft Society (GSAKS, 1933–c.1936). The society’s student membership included Stirling-born animator Norman McLaren, film editor Stewart McAllister and sculptor Helen Biggar. With minimal resources—one Cine-Kodak BB Junior, two 1,000-watt lamps and £10 to work with (McLaren, 1996, p. 31)—the society’s impressionistic debut *Seven Till Five* (dir. Norman McLaren, William J. MacLean, 1934), received the documentary award at the first Scottish

Amateur Film Festival (SAFF) in 1934. Reflecting on this time in 1936, McLaren found emancipation in their amateurism. The amateur, he argued,

has a freedom of choice of subject matter and treatment of subject matter, and there is no censorship of 16mm film. The only dictatorship that exists in the case of the amateur is the dictatorship of limitation of technical means: but that in itself is not a bad thing. (1996, p. 31)

The GSAKS' intention, he adds, was 'not to show the exact nature of a process, as in an educational film, or the accurate relationship of a set of factors to a situation, as in a sociological film; our purpose was simply to make an interesting pattern of visual material' (1996, p. 32). Pursuing increasingly experimental techniques, *Camera Makes Whoopee* (dir. Norman McLaren, William J. MacLean, Violet Anderson, 1936) subsequently employed layers of superimposition, dissolves, bisected frames, stop motion and in-camera effects to produce proto-psychedelic results (1996, p. 33). The same year, McLaren and Biggar collaborated on *Hell Untld* (1936), an expressly political work using a melange of techniques including animation, dramatisation, violent tableaux and found footage, rapidly edited in sequence to incite horror at the accelerating arms race. Duncan Petrie (2000b, pp. 102, 200) notes that 'it is certainly impossible to conceive of the official documentary movement producing such a radical statement,' adding, the work 'could only be made beyond the constraints of state-supported film production.' Fuelling the practices of McLaren and Biggar amongst others, the GSAKS and its output of surrealist experimentation might bear comparison with the European avant-garde. The short-lived society, however, did not offer an alternative to the financial promise of the documentary mainstream to which its talents were eventually siphoned. McLaren, for one, was hired by Grierson to the General Post Office Film Unit (1936–1939), then relocated to the National Film Board of Canada, Ottawa, again at the invitation of Grierson who had been appointed the board's first Commissioner.



Figure 1: McLaren, N., MacLean, W. J., and Anderson, V. (1936) *Camera Makes Whoopee*. [16mm film, black and white] Held at: Glasgow: National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive. 1098.

The GSAKS revealed a link between experimentation and amateurism, i.e. filmmaking outside of professional production economies. In many ways, they foreshadow a tension between non-commercial modes and recourse to public subsidy that remains unresolved to date. The amateur sphere enabled a form of operation, supported by a bespoke film festival, that both accommodated formal experimentation and resisted commercial values. As Sarah Neely (2017, p. 141) offers, ‘the task of locating a history of Scottish Avant-Garde involves a hefty engagement with its rich history of amateur film. Partly, this is because much experimental work has historically been catalogued as amateur.’ *Amateur*, then, can be viewed as a misnomer born of limited available categories, potentially disguising avant-garde work through connotations of immaturity or mawkishness. With reference to *Hell Unltd*, however, Ryan Shand (2007, p. 52) notes, the ‘re-designation of amateur films has the effect of erasing original production and reception contexts, and turning the films into free-floating, a-historical texts, instead of products of a very specific film culture.’ The GSAKS’ idiosyncratic output is here a case in point: although this work could be recaptured as avant-garde by formal measures alone, its circulation necessitates quite a separate understanding.

In the postwar era, under the aegis of the Scottish Council for Development and Industry, the rebooted second Films of Scotland Committee (1955–1982) produced over 150 documentaries. Still decades prior to the emergence of public production funding, in this period the sponsored documentary represented what Petrie (quoted in Blaikie, 2015, p. 74) describes as ‘the only viable form of indigenous film production in Scotland.’ The predominance of this kind of filmmaking was not met without resistance. The pioneering Orcadian filmmaker and poet, Margaret Tait (1988) remembers that in these ‘dreadful days, [...] everybody was expected to turn out the same sort of stuff; and it was all awful [...] and could be no other under the remit people were given.’ Petrie (quoted in Blaikie, 2015, p. 75) describes the FSC productions as perpetuating ‘almost every conceivable Scottish stereotype from the touristic vision of Highland splendour, through the fey depictions of traditional Scottish folk culture and customs, to the lauding of shipyard and steel mill as temples of heroic masculine labour.’ Elsewhere categorised as *Tartanry*, the romanticisation of Highland landscape; *Kailyard*, cabbage-patch depictions of parochial Lowland life; and *Clydesidism*, the image of post-industrial urban decline in the West Coast working-class, by David McCrone (1992) and David Martin-Jones (2009) amongst others, these cultural myths—or the renouncement thereof—remain a preoccupation for certain filmmaking practices to date.

In Scotland, the reign of the sponsored documentary, contingent on corporate influence and with wavering alliance to the Griersonian vision of ‘creative shapings,’ forms a hegemony quite unlike that of other Western filmmaking contexts where the studio-produced drama proliferated. The handful of postwar filmmakers we might recapture as avant-garde, therefore, responded to a dominant paradigm with a unique character. Where the mid-century avant-garde in Europe and the United States had been increasingly concerned with interrogating photographic representation, moving towards structural critique in pursuit of the *truth* of film, dispersed filmmakers in Scotland were attempting the inverse by contesting the documentary mode through the insertion of creative narrative and poetic or political expression. Robin MacPherson (2014, p. 31) notes that:

Beyond the sponsored documentary, Scottish film-making from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s remained largely the preserve of three groups: enthusiastic amateurs; a tiny clutch of artists using film as their primary medium; and a few determined professionals endeavouring, through the occasional self-financed short film or via more adventurous narrative elements smuggled into documentary, to escape the bounds of sponsorship.

Operating in these ways, pockets of disparate filmmaker-led organising began to offer nascent alternatives to the dominant modes of production and exhibition. In the post-industrial town of Wishaw, North Lanarkshire, one such example is found within Italian-Scottish filmmaker Enrico Coccozza. As a promoter, Coccozza established the Connoisseur Film Circle in 1950, screening works from the European avant-garde in an old auction house behind his family café (Neely and Riach, 2009, p. 8). Through Connoisseur Productions, he was himself a remarkable ‘amateur’ filmmaker, strongly influenced by surrealism and the work of Jean Cocteau, upon whom he wrote a doctoral thesis (Neely and Riach, 2009, p. 8).



Figure 2: Coccozza, E. (1959) *Bongo Erotico*. [16mm film, black and white] Held at: Glasgow: National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive. 4316.

Cocozza's 16mm work took a range of forms, from better-known hybrid fiction-documentaries indebted to cinéma vérité like *Chick's Day* (1949–1950), awarded *Amateur Cine World's Film of the Year* in 1951, to surreal, gothic works including *Capriccio* (1954), *The Cat* (1956) and *Bongo Erotico* (1959)—a particularly striking, homoerotic work featuring colour reversal and other material interventions, closer to the aesthetic of Kenneth Anger than Grierson (Cocozza, 1959). Like the GSAKS, Cocozza's work circulated within the amateur sphere, benefitting too from the freedom that allowed, with rare exception in sponsored works. Commissioned by Educational Films of Scotland, *Glasgow's Docklands* (1956), for instance, is an austere short, bereft of his characteristic playfulness (Cocozza, 1956). Where *Chick's Day* emphasised droll local dialect in its voiceover, *Glasgow's Docklands* is narrated by English actor Leonard Maguire in the received pronunciation of the broadcast mainstream (Cocozza, 1949).

Another narrative of artistic emancipation through amateurism—and its inverse of capitulation through sponsorship—might also be located in the work of Margaret Tait. Neely (2009, p. 302) describes Tait's methods as those of a 'true' amateur, in that she was a largely one-woman operation: 'production was often protracted, and assembly driven by opportunity rather than deadline.' For Tait, the 1950s represent a prolific decade, involving a variety of subjects and treatments ranging from the development of signature 16mm portraits *Three Portrait Sketches* (1951) and *A Portrait of Ga* (1952)—a renowned study of the filmmaker's mother in the Orcadian landscape—to the hand-painted celluloid of *Calypso* (1955), a technique appearing up to *Garden Pieces* (1998), likely her last film.

This early period is also characterised by what Neely (2009, p. 305) calls 'creative parsimony': Tait's filmmaking was largely self-financed through a career as a locum General Practitioner and although attempts at securing funding were numerous, only two of over thirty works were enabled by grants (Neely, 2008, p. 218). The first, *The Drift Back* (c.1956), a document of migration and depopulation in Orkney, was financed with just £87 from the Orkney Education Committee (Neely, 2009, p. 306). Much like Cocozza's *Glasgow's Docklands*, completed the same year, *The Drift Back* made concessions to its sponsors, incorporating 'a more conventional voice-over, delivered here by Harald R. Leslie, an Edinburgh Barrister, originally from Orkney' (2009, p. 306). The pilot for a local-interest film magazine, *The Drift Back* is amongst Tait's most proximate work to conventional documentary, testifying to the incompatibility of experimentation and sponsorship with its

prescription of audience and circulation. A more consequential funding success arrived later in *Colour Poems* (1974), the result of a Scottish Arts Council ‘filmmaker as artist’ competition (2009, p. 306).

Tait and Coccozza cultivated an artisanal approach to production which concerned an interrogation of the medium, its materiality and conventions. In this way, they might be gathered together as associates of an avant-garde linked more to the co-op movement than the European New Wave, without any of its mutual support or communication infrastructure. It is productive here to invoke Peter Wollen’s ‘The Two Avant-Gardes,’ which mapped the distinction between artistic and political avant-gardes, to consider whether the latter is also recoverable in the Scottish context. In this mode, the Glasgow-based Dawn Cine Group, founded by Charles Bukelis in 1954, represent one such practice, described by MacPherson (2014, p. 35) as ‘the only example of radical activist film-making in the period.’ Responsible for the campaign film *Let Glasgow Flourish* (1956) which made the case for social housing reform through documentation of the city’s abhorrent slum conditions (Dawn Cine Group, 1956), the group infiltrated the available documentary infrastructure with a socialist-activist imperative.

Though engaging with the philosophical concerns of an avant-garde, those producing alternatives to the documentary tradition are not easily reconciled as a unified group. The emergence of oppositional practices is at best fragmentary and not indicative of an organised movement. Neither Tait nor Coccozza saw themselves as part of an ‘avant-garde’ tradition, Neely and Alan Riach (2009, p. 8) note, despite shared concerns for formal experimentation and an evident appreciation of their European contemporaries. The plotting of an avant-garde prehistory in Scotland is further complicated by the necessity of extranational training and opportunities, factors which although abated, persist in some form. The filmmakers, Neely and Riach (2009, p. 2) add, ‘who received most significant support and critical acclaim in the mid-to-late twentieth century most often did so by working outwith Scotland.’ McLaren permanently relocated to Canada, whilst Tait and Coccozza each trained at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome. In this way, the early history of avant-garde filmmaking in Scotland is one of at least partial repatriation.

2.1.2 Expanded practice and the Scottish diaspora, 1960–1970

Until the 1960s, the avant-garde film had proliferated more or less exclusively within the context of cinema. Though visual artists had worked with film media since the 1920s, the circulation and reception for this material had remained the province of film. In the 1960s, however, film apparatus was untethered from the theatre and the film system with it. This separation, Andrew V. Uroskie (2015, p. 54) argues, was the prerogative of a postwar expanded cinema. Through counterculture at first, film technologies and techniques became available to visual artists and performers, harnessed within an expanding repertoire of media. At this time, however, the prohibitive social conservatism of Scottish institutions alongside the growing media industry and international network of London, which David Curtis (2007, p. 2) has called an ‘irresistible magnet,’ created a southward current for artists. In this drive, a diaspora of London-based Scots experimenting with film emerges including Eduardo Paolozzi, Mark Boyle and Joan Hills, and Bruce McLean. In this group, we find perhaps the last generation for whom Scotland was a wholly inviable site for artistic production.

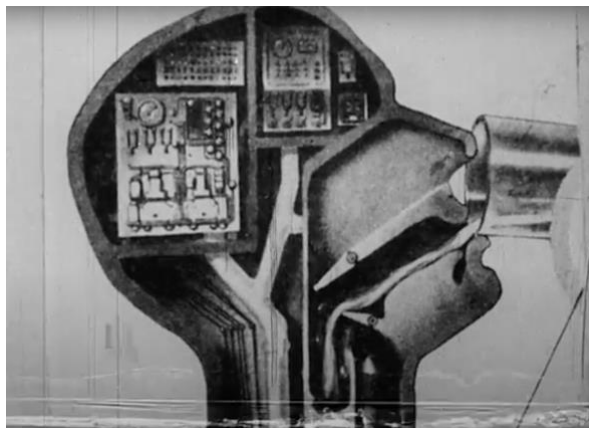


Figure 3: Paolozzi, E. (1963) *History of Nothing*. [16mm film, black and white].

An Italian-Scot, Eduardo Paolozzi was born in Leith and trained briefly at the Edinburgh College of Art before completing his studies in London. Working across print and sculpture with an identifiable collage technique, he co-founded the Independent Group (1952–1955), pioneering the British pop art movement. In the early 1960s, his signature approach of combining associative imagery appropriated from mass culture, generating colourful, machinic patterns and rhythms, was transferred to 16mm in two works. Made with the facilities of the Television Department at Royal College of Art, London, *History of Nothing* (1963) combined found images of industrial design, urban architecture, diagrams and surrealist illustration to form a sequential collage with a soundtrack of similarly juxtaposed

recordings from the modern metropolis: distorted jazz, locomotives, aircraft (Paolozzi, 1963). When Paolozzi was accorded a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (21 September – 10 November 1964), *History of Nothing* screened daily (5 October – 10 November 1964). Recognised as an extension of his practice across media, critic Dore Ashton commented that he ‘builds the texture of the film in the same way he builds his sculptures. Small details are repeated in slightly different forms throughout’ (Museum of Modern Art, 1965). Although not present within the gallery, curator Peter Selz’ ancillary programming of the work evidences a concession toward the validity of film as an artistic media. Paolozzi made a second film, *Kakafon Kakkoon* (1965), which triangulated a different relationship to his print-based practice (Weitman, 1999, p. 42). Rather than transferring collage techniques to the filmmaking process, this took his lurid print work as raw visual material and used filmmaking to abstract and animate, forming something between documentation and autonomous artwork. Paolozzi’s interaction with 16mm was brief, marginal to his better-known work in the plastic arts—having already represented Britain at the 1960 Venice Biennale. These works, therefore, only represent a cursory if productive detour in other media, offering a template for an interdisciplinarity popularised decades later.

The integration of film apparatus within the core of a visual arts practice may have first emerged amongst expatriate Scots in the collaboration of Glasgow-born Mark Boyle and Edinburgh-born Joan Hills, latterly the Boyle Family. Whilst in London, the duo were in fact amongst the first of any to work in this way. Purchasing a second-hand projector in 1962 to ‘help paint words and phrases onto assemblages,’ they undertook their first projection experiments with ‘boiling liquids and burning slides’ (Boyle Family, n.d.). Craig Richardson (2011, p. 45) notes that ‘by 1964 the public light shows of Mark Boyle and Joan Hills were becoming culturally iconic.’ This practice was fully realised in their trilogy of *Son et Lumière* performances: *Earth, Air, Fire & Water*; *Insects, Reptiles & Water Creatures* both debuted at the Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre, London (1966); and *Bodily Fluids & Functions*, at the Bluecoat Arts Centre, Liverpool (1967). The *Son et Lumière* works combined live chemical reaction with physical interference to generate moving images, often determined by chance. With John Claxton, Boyle and Hills formed the Sensual Laboratory which toured the United States in 1967, producing psychedelic ‘Light-Environments’ for Jimi Hendrix and Soft Machine (*Biographical Notes*, n.d.). In various collaborations, they performed at the ICA, UFO Club and Arts Lab, contributing to the counterculture in which the London Film-Makers’ Co-op was emerging. Between 1966 and 1968, Boyle received two awards of £250

from the Arts Council of Great Britain (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1967, 1968). Though supporting their parallel sculptural practice of *earth studies*—fibreglass recreations of randomised sections of ground—these grants endorse the duo’s identity as visual artists, distinct from psychedelic subculture and its unfavourable connotations. Like Paolozzi, the Boyle Family represented Britain at the Venice Biennale (1978), affirming their entry into the arts establishment—and the abandonment of the projector with it.

A third member of this expatriate generation, Glasgow-born Bruce McLean offers yet another position on film media. McLean studied at The Glasgow School of Art (1961–1963) before migrating to St. Martin’s School of Art, London. There he remained, cultivating a multidisciplinary practice upon a dematerialised view of sculpture in which other media are mobilised to perform expanded functions, typified in the comic photograph series *Pose Work for Plinths* (1971) which records the artist’s attempts to achieve the reclined posture of a modernist sculpture using his own body. In two 16mm films, *In the Shadow of Your Smile, Bob* (1970) and *A Million Smiles for One of Your Miles, Walter* (1971), McLean again confronts staid artistic convention. Addressing American sculptors Robert Morris and Walter De Maria respectively, the films mimicked the two artists’ ‘cool’ self-image as presented in portraits printed in the catalogue to the paradigm-shifting exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* (Kunsthalle Bern, 1969) (Applin, 2011, p. 84). McLean’s retort is then a humorous pastiche of artworld machismo and sincerity. In the first, McLean performs to camera in what Jo Applin (2011, p. 86) has described as, ‘a contemporary restaging of Brancusi’s anxiety of being in the shadow of another artist’s achievements.’ Presented as a real-time, two-screen work—Morris’s static portrait on one side and McLean’s monologue on the other—the work also brokers a spatial relationship with its viewer, prefiguring the rise of the film installation.



Figure 4: McLean, B. (1970/2011) *In the Shadow of Your Smile, Bob*. [16mm film, black and white].

In Scotland, much later, McLean was commissioned to devise a video for broadcast on Channel 4 as part of *19:4:90 Television Interventions* (1990). *Mackintosh 2* (1990) records the artist through repeated attempts at scaling a theatrical fascia resembling GSA's Mackintosh Building. As before, McLean's irreverent video undermines an aesthetic canon, here via the transformation of the sacrosanct architecture of his hometown into a cartoonish climbing wall (McLean, 1990). The use of one media to disrupt another forms something of a signature technique. Curator Charles Esche (2020) explains that McLean was 'from that other generation of Scottish artists who had moved to London and had no concept of the idea that you would want to stay in Glasgow.' Here, he identifies a proportional relationship between assimilation with London's artworld centre and international recognition.

For many, expatriation formed a necessity, corresponding in turns with notions of progress, ambition and critical appreciation. Cordelia Oliver (1970) bemoaned this habitual drift: 'like Alan Davie and Paolozzi before them, first the [Robert] Croziers and then the Mark Boyles left swiftly for London, and no wonder.' Whilst this pull diminishes with cultural devolution after 1967, deference to the metropolitan centre of London—its prestigious institutions and control of the art market—casts a long shadow over artistic production in Scotland. Though weakening, in the 1970s and 1980s this attachment remains a considerable force in shaping the provision of training, support and subsidy in Scotland. As Richardson (2011, p. 61) notes, throughout the 1970s, 'the international standing of many resident Scottish artists was relatively minor in relation to the international recognition of those Scottish artists who had emerged from the previous decade and taken part in its diaspora.' That is, the promise of opportunity through expatriation had material consequences.

In this prehistory, I hope to have unpacked the compound social, economic and political situation into which this research arrives. Though non-exhaustive, this survey offers an image of the diverse approaches artists took in navigating an environment of hostility towards experimentation. If anything unites this disparate order, from McLaren to McLean, it might be the necessity of internationalism, of generating networks for education, influence and outreach beyond the small nation of Scotland. Though these concerns endure, spilling into the 1970s and beyond, the work of new promoters in Richard Demarco and the nascent Scottish Arts Council initiate a new paradigm for the cultivation of and reception to an avant-garde in Scotland, originating at first in the nation's capital, Edinburgh.

2.2 *Grenzgänger*: Richard Demarco and *Strategy: Get Arts* (1970)

In 1966, Richard Demarco left the Traverse Theatre to establish a gallery in his name on Melville Crescent, aiming to ‘put Edinburgh on the map as an art centre’ (Demarco quoted in Oliver, 1970). In the 1967–1968 financial year, the Richard Demarco Gallery (RDG) became an inaugural grant awardee of the newly established Scottish Arts Council, receiving up to £1,900 in funding—a significant proportion of the £16,982 allocated to visual art in Scotland (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1968, pp. 38, 104). The following year, the RDG’s funding rose to £4,700, over a quarter of the national allocation, far more than awarded to any other recipient and supplemented further by ‘very large contributions’ from private backers (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1969, pp. 45, 122). This unrivalled subsidy provides an indication of the gallery’s singularity. A ‘non-profit-distributing art gallery’ (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1969, p. 45), it also represented a novel phenomenon for the SAC. A combination of high-end commercial and subsidised countercultural models, the gallery, Demarco (2005a) claims, was inspired by ‘London’s Bond Street and Cork Street galleries’ and ‘the original Institute of Contemporary Art.’

A determinedly interdisciplinary approach characterised much of the RDG’s curatorial work, which in the early 1970s forged a connection between Scotland and a growing pan-European cognoscenti of film, video and performance pioneers. The first and arguably most significant of these came via *Strategy: Get Arts* (23 August – 12 September 1970), an exhibition held at the Edinburgh College of Art throughout the Edinburgh Festival. At the invitation of Brigitte Lohmeyer, Cultural Attaché to the German Embassy, Demarco visited Germany meeting with artists Günther Uecker and Joseph Beuys, whose work he’d seen at Documenta 4 (1968) (Demarco, 2005a). This introduction formed the seed for an exhibition, which invited thirty-five artists, predominantly Düsseldorf-based, many involved with Group Zero (1957–1966), to take over two floors of the ECA building. The exhibition’s framework of exchange had an implicit political motive, featuring artists including Uecker, Blinky Palermo and Sigmar Polke who had left the communist GDR as *Grenzgänger* (‘border-crossers’) (Weikop, 2019). Extending the postwar spirit of healing upon which the Edinburgh Festival was founded, Demarco (2005a) explains that *Strategy: Get Arts* ‘was a response to the agony of a Europe torn apart and divided cruelly by the Berlin Wall.’

An assessment of the material impact of *Strategy: Get Arts* is difficult for multiple reasons. Demarco (2005a) has compared the importance of the exhibition to *When Attitudes Become*

Form (Kunsthalle Bern, 1969), the much-storied exhibition curated by Harald Szeemann which remodelled the exhibition as an artistic thesis in itself. Demarco's assertion has little support amongst historiography but does testify to Craig Richardson's (2011, p. 3) view that 'Demarco's resilience and persistent attempts to self-mythologise have become misaligned with the undoubted contribution he made to Scottish art.' Richardson points to the inextricable influence of Demarco's gregarious character upon the historicisation of his activities, echoing certain press commentary around the show. Cordelia Oliver (1970, p. 8), for instance, describes him as 'Napoleonic in his Latin volatility' before praising the 'incalculable' influence of the gallery. Edward Gage (1970) remarked upon his 'boundless energy and enthusiasm [...] the latter trait, although it may seem too prodigally expended at times, is truly catalytic.' In another way, recent initiatives like the Demarco Digital Archive (Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, 2004–2008) have ensured access to primary study materials not uniformly afforded to contemporaries such as the SAC. These factors combined risk an overstatement of Demarco's impact. One notable advance upon *When Attitudes Become Form*, however, I argue, comes in the centrality of the moving image to *Strategy: Get Arts*.

Perhaps more radical than the emancipatory claims it made for Europe was *Strategy: Get Arts*' undoing of exhibitionary convention. Introducing the catalogue, Demarco (2005b) proclaimed that 'the exhibition will [...] certainly set us thinking about the future shape and form of art galleries. It will compete with the most advanced ideas of contemporary theatre, music and cinema involving elements of all of these more popular art forms.' These aims are further elaborated in a planning meeting report, where Beuys and Georg Jappe 'outlined in detail, the nature of the Exhibition which would consist, not so much of an Exhibition of paintings and of sculpture, but of films, environments and visual concerts involving sound' (Demarco, 1970). On the ground, the exhibition devoted a large central space to the films of Claus Böhmler, Mauricio Kagel, Christof Kohlhöfer, Lutz Mommartz and Tony Morgan (Demarco, 2005b). Elsewhere, film was adopted by Beuys in both the recording and performance of his action, *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch): Scottish Symphony* (1970). In this way, *Strategy: Get Arts* manifested an integrated conception of artistic practice rarely seen in the UK again until the 1990s.

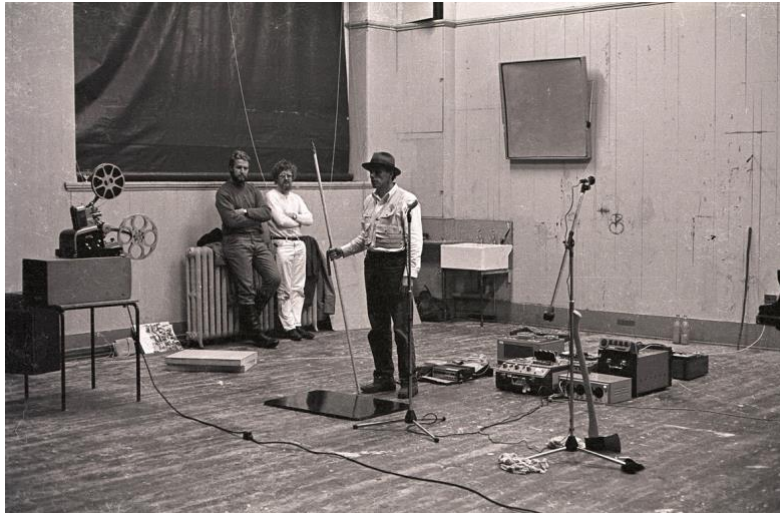


Figure 5: Oliver, G. (1970) Joseph Beuys and Henning Christiansen, performance as part of *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch): The Scottish Symphony* at *Strategy: Get Arts*, Edinburgh College of Art. [Photograph] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Demarco Digital Archive.

David Curtis (2007, p. 38) identifies artist-filmmaker Tony Morgan’s contribution to *Strategy: Get Arts* as a particular watershed moment. Showing loops of film ‘which allowed for continuous exhibition as long as the loop lasted,’ Curtis describes how Morgan hinted at ‘the possibility of permanent film installations.’ Though extracting Morgan—the only English participant—from the group context, Curtis makes a productive distinction between the looped modes of display at *Strategy: Get Arts* and prior conventions of screening as a unique, one-time event. While the screening format also emphasises the discrete authorship of each work, the *Strategy: Get Arts* programme fostered a contingency between practices, co-produced and overlapping in their production and display. Morgan’s 16mm work *Description 1970 Düsseldorf* (1970), for instance, prominently featured co-exhibitors Beuys, Palermo, Polke and Gerhard Richter (Demarco, 2005b).²² He described it as ‘documentation of the artists and organisers invited from Düsseldorf to the Edinburgh Festival [...] the sound track will be the description of the man (seen full face) by the woman (seen in profile)’ (Morgan quoted in Demarco, 2005b). In this way, the self-narrating film is site-specific: the surrounding exhibition enhances its legibility and provides its subject.

In the same space, filmmaker Lutz Mommartz presented *Das Meer ist Unendlich Schön (The Sea is Infinitely Beautiful)* (1970), an elaborate installation in which five 16mm projectors, spanning three gallery walls, created a seascape stitched together from footage shot at the edge of various shores. Described by Mommartz (2020) as ‘a panorama of different

²² Morgan showed the films *Us* (1969); *Munich People* (1969); *Vis-à-vis* (1970); *Please put out your tongue* (1969); and *Description 1970 Düsseldorf* (1970).

movements and surfs,’ this collaged environment was linked by audio recordings of the sea. After numerous passes through the projectors, the reversal film stock wore down, breaking the illusion and committing the ephemeral installation to memory; ‘it shall stay legendary,’ Mommartz (2020) adds, suggesting, that the film print, like water, can never be the same twice. Less a ‘hinting at the possibility of permanent film installations’ (Curtis, 2007, p. 38), *Das Meer ist Unendlich Schön* testifies to the manifestation of elaborate, multi-screen moving image environments at *Strategy: Get Arts*, arguably the first instance thereof in Scotland, if not the UK. Whilst in Scotland, Mommartz also shot *Das Atem des Schafes* (*The Breath of the Sheep*) (1970), a single-screen travelogue on black and white 8mm. Edited years later, the work comprises scenes from Eilean Donan Castle, alongside abstracted footage of a maggot-infested sheep carcass and a psychedelic soundtrack featuring Jimi Hendrix’s *1983... (A Merman I Should Turn to Be)* (1968), with cameos from exhibiting artists Günther Uecker and Gotthard Graubner.²³



Figure 6: Mommartz, L. (1970) *Das Atem des Schafes*. [8mm film, black and white] Courtesy of the artist.

Beuys himself instrumentalised film in a number of ways for his action *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch): Scottish Symphony* (1970). Ahead of the exhibition—his first in the UK—Beuys made two trips to Rannoch Moor (Walker, 2002), described by Murdo Macdonald (2010, p. 367) as ‘a place of historical and legendary cultural density combined with stresses both economic and ecological.’ On the second visit, he was accompanied by family members, Demarco, and a number of others in a convoy of three vehicles. Once there, Beuys performed *Action on Rannoch Moor* (1970), where he reportedly formed a lump of gelatine into a heart shape, held it to the sun, and squeezed to mimic the beat of a heart (Weikop, 2019). The journey and action were recorded on colour 8mm film by Rory McEwen, *Joseph Beuys in*

²³ First shown in Scotland at a retrospective screening organised via my own curatorial platform, Transit Arts: *Lutz Mommartz: The breath of the sheep and the sea is infinitely beautiful* (CCA Glasgow, 26 January 2017).

Scotland (1970), and on black and white 16mm by Mark Littlewood, *Moorfilm* (1970) (Macdonald, 2010, p. 370). At ECA, the latter was double-projected on top of an existing film—Beuys and Henning Christiansen’s *Eurasienstab* (1968)—as part of the action (Watson, 2010, p. 19). Like Morgan and Mommartz, Beuys employs film here both as documentation and as artistic material in its own right, demonstrating a porous double usage characteristic of the time, in many ways invoking the American underground of Andy Warhol’s Factory films or Jonas Mekas’ diaries.

The exhibition attracted significant controversy though one incident was particularly consequential for filmmakers. Days after opening, film cans were seized from Mommartz, Morgan, Kohlhöfer and Polke. In a letter to Demarco, Mommartz (1970) wrote that police ‘took all my films and film material without to give me [*sic*] a paper about confiscating,’ before detailing a list of twelve seized works. In his summary of the exhibition, John A. Walker (2002, p. 37) notes that these and others were confiscated because the British Board of Film Censors had not licenced them for screening. Though an effect of benign bureaucracy, this confiscation speaks to a legal infrastructure ill-equipped for non-theatrical film exhibition.

Richardson (2011, p. 69) notes that *Strategy: Get Arts* ‘presented a coherent alternative to the retrogressive practices currently promoted by many of the residence institutions.’ As a progressive project, that is, it formed an anomaly amongst the social conservatism of the Scottish artworld. Whilst Demarco’s comparison with *When Attitudes Become Form* feels unproductive, a stronger relation might be found in in *Prospect 71: Projection* (1971). One of a series of annual surveys at Kunsthalle Düsseldorf—a partner in *Strategy: Get Arts*—*Prospect 71* was entirely comprised of film, video, slide projection and serial photography (Kölle, 2014). Amongst the earliest such examples, in the very least ‘an absolute novelty’ (Zoller, 2015, p. 29), its roster included crossover in Beuys, Böhmler, Morgan, Polke, Richter and Uecker amongst an international cohort. Maxa Zoller (2015, pp. 33, 35) describes its design as a ‘labyrinth of “black boxes”’ in which ‘film could be seen in a direct, intimate, and physical way [...] ignoring the scheduled entry times of the cinema.’ Notably, this mode of display garnered critique from Mommartz who decried the dissolution of films ‘in an experience of space (*Raumerlebnis*)’ and called for a return to the ‘individual film’ (Zoller, 2015, p. 36). In this detraction, a differentiation can be inferred between Demarco’s project of interdisciplinarity, embedding film within the exhibition, and the experiential flattening

felt at *Prospect 71*, a portent, Zoller (2015, p. 37) suggests, of the ‘perceptual conditions of late capitalism and digital flow.’

Over subsequent Edinburgh Festivals, the RDG would continue to facilitate similar transnational exchanges, including surveys like *Romanian Art Today* (1971), *Atelier '72: an exhibition of contemporary Polish artists* (1972), *Eight Yugoslav Artists* (1973) and *Seven French Artists* (1973). These activities would continue to utilise moving image technologies, though increasingly as a means of recording the performances of artists Beuys, Paul Neagu and Marina Abramovic. Following *Strategy: Get Arts*, however, the facilitation of film and video as an autonomous artform became a growing priority for the neighbouring SAC in its manifold role as exhibitor and funder, initiating therein a symbolic transfer of custody from one organisation to the other.

2.3 The Scottish Arts Council, 1967–1976

In the late 1960s, Euan McArthur (2013, p. 3) notes, ‘successive waves of [cultural, territorial, and political] nationalist advance’ were transforming the Scottish self-image. This nationalism was increasingly impressing upon policy-makers, signalled by an historic victory for the Scottish Nationalist Party, gaining their second MP in the 1967 Hamilton by-election (Galloway and Jones, 2010, p. 37). The Scottish Committee’s share of the Arts Council of Great Britain grant-in-aid had also been in decline, as Susan Galloway and Huw David Jones (2010, p. 31) report, reducing from 12.08% in 1946–1947 (in accordance with the Goschen formula) to 6.6% in 1962–1963. Combined, these factors generated a heightened demand for greater Scottish influence over British arts policy and in February 1967, under a new Royal Charter, the Committee was reconstituted as the Scottish Arts Council (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1967, p. 33). More than a rebrand, however, this ratified structural changes which ensured the autonomy of the SAC. As McArthur (2013, p. 126) identifies, these included the amendment of Scottish and Welsh territorial committees’ remit from ‘assisting’ to ‘exercising’ the ACGB’s functions and relinquished the power of the ACGB to disband, at any time, either committee. In effect, this represented a shift in arts governance in Scotland from London to Edinburgh. A restoration of the Goschen formula followed, granting the SAC ‘a position of considerable independence in the 1970s’ (Galloway and Jones, 2010, p. 31).

By 1976, the SAC Annual Report detailed that ‘Scotland’s slice of the British cake, including supplementary grants was 11.1%,’ then exceeding its population share of 9.7% (Dunbar, 1976, p. 2). Throughout this period, the SAC benefitted from what Galloway and Jones (2010, p. 29) describe as an anomalous *double arm’s length* position from the UK Government which afforded additional freedoms through less direct accountability.²⁴ Following the Charter, this SAC’s newfound independence was manifest symbolically in the establishment of two flagship gallery spaces opened at Blythswood Square, Glasgow (1967) and Charlotte Square, Edinburgh (1968) (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1967, p. 36, 1969, p. 45). From these bicoastal bases a concerted engagement was fostered with an expanding register of media, including film and video, with both spaces involved in the exhibition of moving image work by 1973. Joining the Richard Demarco Gallery and New 57 Gallery (1966–1984)—described as two ‘concerted efforts to affect established institutional

²⁴ This special arrangement continued until the Scotland Act 1998, which ended this arrangement bringing the SAC into the closer observation of the new Scottish Parliament in 1999.

specificities that had denied emergent local practitioners exhibition opportunities' by Deborah Jackson (Brown, Jackson and Mulholland, 2018, p. 145)—the arrival of the SAC galleries completed the set, establishing an entirely novel environment for the promotion of contemporary artistic production in Scotland.

These years also encompass a key turn for the study of art, Alexander Alberro (2008) notes, subsumed in a reorganisation of philosophies of culture and society around post-structuralist theories linked to the global political maelstrom of civil rights, anti-war and socialist protests in Western Europe and North America in 1968. For the material history of film and video, this also represents a period of landmark developments. In London, modelled upon the Film-Makers' Cooperative, New York (1961–), the London Film-Makers' Co-op was founded in 1966, quickly becoming a locus for the avant-garde practices which divorced film from the theatrical exhibitionary context. Meanwhile, video art was inaugurated with the market introduction of portable recording equipment in 1968—Nam June Paik's purchase of a Sony Portapak in 1965 is often accorded the creation myth (Meigh-Andrews, 2006, p. 17; Lockhart, 2012, p. 182). The following few years witness the rapid refinement of this technology as a creative medium, culminating in the first artist intervention into UK broadcast space, David Hall's *TV Interruptions* (1971) on Scottish Television (STV), and the first major exhibitions of video art like *The Video Show* (1975).

2.3.1 Locations Edinburgh (1971)

In this period of new frontiers, the influence of the SAC via its functions as a curatorial and commissioning body is often overlooked. Indeed, it was the SAC's early project *Locations Edinburgh* (22 August – 12 September 1971) which provided the context and support for Hall's broadcast experiment, staking a position of advocacy for some of the most progressive moving image practices over the following decade. *Locations Edinburgh* was curated by Alistair Mackintosh as the SAC's contribution to the 1971 Edinburgh Festival and featured interventions across the city by seven visiting artists including Hall, Stuart Brisley, Ed Herring, Peter Joseph, David Parsons, Jeffrey Shaw and Graham Stevens. Each was given £500 (Sutherland, 1971) and offered 'as much say as possible in the running of it,' though none knew Edinburgh well (Mackintosh, 1971). Confident in its radicality and uniquely site-specific approach, the exhibition was introduced as 'the first of its kind in the British Isles' (Mackintosh, 1971). In the accompanying catalogue—an experimental folio in itself—Mackintosh (1971) explains,

many artists have been becoming dissatisfied with the idea of showing their work within the walls of an art gallery. They argue that only a tiny proportion of the public ever comes into an art gallery. [...] The real solution seemed to be to ask artists to create work specifically for the Festival period. As these works would stem from direct contact with the City, its geography, its people and its systems as well as its architecture, they would not necessarily take the form of sculpture, or even of any three-dimensional shape.

In rejecting the gallery's staid viewing conventions, the programme was, according to an unnamed official, 'in spite of the sensational nature of many of the projects, [...] a serious and totally responsible attempt to smash the barriers between art and people and to escape the terrible sense of intellectual boredom that is suffocating the avant-garde' ('Art show by avant-garde at Festival,' 1971).

Affirming the integrity of the exhibition, substantial communication was devoted to safeguarding against hostility. Mackintosh (1971) predicted that 'some will find certain parts of this exhibition absurd or perhaps even insulting.' This expectation was met in telling responses from popular media. In a televised feature produced for Scottish Television, presenter Alex Dickson (quoted in Sutherland, 1971) comments 'there were plenty of critics ready to condemn it as a disgrace, an insult, a waste of money, within the first two or three days, and certainly some artists didn't exactly establish a rapport with the public,' before asking Mackintosh, 'do you think that you're getting value for money?' Dickson's jocular navigation of the exhibition thereafter identifies with a Scottish social conservatism, viewing contemporary artistic practice as curious at best, if not foreign and frivolous. This alienation was perhaps exacerbated by the homogenous identity of the participating artists: London-based, bohemian, white and male. Even for artworld insiders the disruption of entrenched exhibitionary convention was met with resistance. An advocate for the avant-garde, Cordelia Oliver (1971) bemoaned, 'while I applaud the Scottish Arts Council for trying to leap ahead of other possible contenders in the contemporary art stakes, I deplore the extra load on weary critics.'

Criticism was largely devoid of concerted engagement with the work, however, and failed to account for the project's innovative propositions on where and how art could circulate, encompassing interventions in performance, sound, video and installation. In *Alexanders' Car Showroom Event* (1971), for instance, Brisley occupied the eponymous vitrine-like showroom where he took to destroying three white-washed vehicles in a durational performance. Then a sculptor and filmmaker, Hall's contribution, however, left perhaps the

greatest legacy, widely regarded as a landmark in the use of video as an artistic medium. A member of the Artist Placement Group (APG), Hall was known to the SAC through his 16mm film *Vertical* (1969) (Mackintosh, 1971) which recorded sculpture in the landscape using forced perspective techniques to illustrate the deceptive potential of lens-based media. For *Locations Edinburgh*, he initially proposed ‘a project which specifically dealt with meteorological features of Edinburgh considered as an art work’ without identifying a form beyond possibly ‘a film or a number of short films’ (Hall quoted in Mackintosh, 1971). Hall later decided that television would be the ideal medium, instructing the SAC to negotiate with STV. With the backing of Controller of Programmes Tony Firth, they agreed to broadcasting ten unannounced short works during commercial breaks throughout the run of the festival (Mackintosh, 1971). The works appeared uncontextualised, untitled and uncredited, only subsequently lent the title of *TV Interruptions* (1971), after which seven were selected for redistribution as *7 TV Pieces* (1971). In service to the conceptual basis of the project, this framing—or lack thereof—was designed to negate preconceptions. Mackintosh (quoted in Hartney, 1996, p. 43) described how the audience ‘didn’t know what they were looking at and didn’t expect it, so all the rubbish surrounding art was circumvented.’ Further contributing to this strategy of disorientation, Hall’s catalogue contribution is indecipherable, comprising backwards script and a garbled arrangement of letters.²⁵



Figure 7: D. Hall in Sutherland, J. (1970) *FESTIVAL, LOCATIONS EDINBURGH*. [Telecined 16mm film, colour] Held at: Glasgow: National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive. T0829.

²⁵ The opening sentence reads ‘Uygrgh bnhe hnmreorae lrt t loeasuoi llf htyuoae kygr cwkiyt d fe aolmbs abscheoaiu ktuoae’ (Hall, 1971).

Made with the assistance of artist Tony Sinden and producer Anna Ridley, also of the APG, the ten works were first shot on 16mm film then telecined for broadcast, becoming video in the process of transmission. The rationale for this, and their shooting outdoors, Hall (quoted in Knight, 1999, p. 18) explains, was that ‘STV would not accept non-broadcast standard video recordings at that time and the union would not accept a non-union director using their studios.’ Responsive to the festival context, they were made on site over ten days and broadcast within two days of filming. Hall (quoted in Hatfield, 2005a, p. 8) later recalled,

I would literally in the evening be thinking about what I might do the next day. [...] The next morning, I would shoot a piece. This being on 16mm film, there was no way I could get stuff processed in Scotland. So at lunch time I drove like a maniac out to Edinburgh airport, put the exposed film in a can down to I think Kay’s Laboratory in Soho, and at the same time collected the print that I’d sent the day before, drove back to a little studio [...] where I edited it and put it together with the sound. I sent off this tape [...] to Glasgow late that afternoon and it was shown the next day.

Adding to known socio-economic factors, Hall offers an additional technological basis for artistic deference to London at this time, noting the lack of processing capability in Scotland.

The works themselves ranged from elegant, playful concepts which drew attention to the physicality of the television monitor and the act of viewing, to more cumbersome exercises in exposing the gap between signified and signifier. In the best-known work, *Tap Piece*, a household tap appears against a white background, water begins to flow and the waterline rises, before being tilted and drained out one corner of the frame. Invoking *tromp l’oeil* techniques, the piece transforms the television monitor into a tank, drawing attention to the box-like physicality of the technology. In another, variously described as *Interruption Piece* or *Burning TV*, a monitor in the landscape burns, cut intermittently by a black screen and a voiceover that announces ‘interruption.’ Here Hall parodies the viewing schedule and its staccato flow of content and interruption. In further works, sites throughout Edinburgh provide a backdrop for similar structural one-liners, revealing the mechanisms behind the illusion via manipulations like repetition, time-lapse, re-photography and cropping.



Figure 8: Hall, D. (1971) *Interruption Piece*. [Telecined 16mm film, black and white].

Despite reaching around 250,000 viewers per night (Hartney, 1996, p. 43), Hall's project failed to make an impression with critics, omitted from Oliver's *Locations Edinburgh* coverage and other sources. This wasn't unusual, as Julia Knight (1996b, p. 2) reminds us, even the much-lauded exhibition *The Video Show* 'failed to attract the attention of any art critics,' adding, 'what little writing about video art there was in those early years, was of necessity done largely by the artists themselves.' The recuperation of this work, therefore, owes much to Hall's own narrativisation; as Steven Ball and Catherine Elwes (2014, p. 313) note, he was amongst the first to write about video in the UK. Anecdotally, public reception seemed similarly ambivalent. Hall (quoted in Hatfield, 2005a, p. 9) remembers watching reactions to *Tap Piece* in a pub:

They had the TV on all the time and they were all sleeping or reading newspapers, dozing and then suddenly the TV began to fill up with water and the newspapers dropped, they all woke up and looked amazed. They were disgruntled and then it finished, and they all dozed off again.

As a key agent amongst historicisation, Hall's predominance within source material creates a difficulty in measuring the contemporary impact of *TV Interruptions*. Hall became instrumental in articulating definitions of video art, theorising that 'Video Art is video as the artwork—the parameters deriving from the characteristics of the medium itself, rather than art work using video—which adopts a device for an already defined content' (Hall, 1978). Through this frame, works like *TV Interruptions* are recuperated as a convenient archetype, regardless of initial reception. Lacking archival corroboration, the veracity of this historical record is limited. *TV Interruptions* can however be attached to two empirical milestones as Hall's first foray into video and the first broadcast intervention by an artist in the UK, albeit

within the territory of Scotland.²⁶ The work has inspired at least two explicit iterations in *19:4:90 Television Interventions* (Channel 4, 1990) and *TV Interruptions '93* (MTV, 1993).

The memorialisation of the work's radical exhibition context had been less far-ranging. *Locations Edinburgh*, as Craig Richardson (2011, p. 76) writes,

has not proven to be a memorable staging post in Scotland's visual arts development in the style of *Strategy: Get Arts*. Its provision of an information model for future curatorial engagement with new experiential context such as broadcast media was mistakenly assumed to include a revelatory community impact.

Shared in the profile of *TV Interventions* and *Strategy: Get Arts*, but not by *Locations Edinburgh* as a whole, I suggest, is the benefit of vociferous and continued promotion by their narrative actors: Hall and Demarco. This lacking custodianship of SAC history, marked in the dispersal of its archive, I add, has served to obscure two further exhibitions: *Open Circuit* (1973) and *Open Cinema* (1976). Despite claims on markedly progressing the exhibition of moving image in the gallery, their innovation is largely unacknowledged.

2.3.2 *Open Circuit* (1973) and *Open Cinema* (1976)

At the SAC's Charlotte Square gallery, *Open Circuit* (18 August – 9 September 1973) represented an ambitious reckoning with exhibitionary convention. Described by curators Lesley Greene and Robert Breen (LG and RB, 1973) in their introduction as 'a reaction against the concept of a static exhibition,' *Open Circuit* accommodated a range of projects wherein media were mobilised to continuously change the exhibition's contents, its eponymous *open* signalling something of this participatory and evolving nature.²⁷ Over three weeks, its programme hosted a sprawling network of local and international film- and videomakers. The gallery was divided into a multifunctional cinema space and 'the Video part,' a production space with the appearance of a working television studio (Scottish Arts Council, 1973c). The cinema hosted presentations of single-screen films distributed by the SAC and Arts Council of Great Britain; work from the Royal College of Art, Newport College of Art and University of Bristol Drama Department; Bruce Lacey, premiering *The*

²⁶ Peter Donebauer's *Entering* (1974) would mark the first nationwide broadcast, shown on BBC Two (Maziere, 2003).

²⁷ By 1976 both Lesley Greene and Lindsay Gordon were employed as Art Assistants by the SAC, raising uncertainty around the 'LG' signoff employed in catalogue entries for both *Open Circuit* (1973) and *Open Cinema* (1976). It has not been possible to corroborate Greene's curatorial involvement in these projects through archival material alone, therefore this research follows attributions made by Julia Knight (1996a, p. 354), Craig Richardson (2011, p. 77) and Malcolm Dickson (2012, p. 139).

Lacey Rituals (1973); David Hall and Tony Sinden (*View, Actor, Edge, Between and This Surface*, all 1972/1973, alongside solo works); Ian Breakwell (*Growth*, 1969; *Estate*, listed as *Ideal Home*, 1971–1975; *Nine Jokes*, listed as *9 Films*, 1971; *Yes/No*, 1972) and his collaborations with Mike Leggett (*Sheet*, 1970; *Unword*, 1970; *One*, 1971); and selected films by John Lennon and Yoko Ono. Alongside these monographic screenings, programmes of surrealist filmmaking and 1960s ‘computer films’ added a historical flavour to this work. Luis Buñuel’s *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), *Él* (1953) and Hans Richter’s *Dreams that Money Can Buy* (1947) all screened as part of the former. The latter, meanwhile, included works by Stan VanDerBeek, The Senses Bureau, John Whitney and Peter Struyken and was organised to coincide with the Computer Arts Society’s conference and five-day ‘eventibition’ *Interact: Machine: Man: Society* (27–31 August 1973) also taking place across Edinburgh (Computer Arts Society, 1973).

Departing from the single screen, the cinema space was also used in spatialised or live ways. Over three consecutive days, the avant-garde French Groupe Lettriste presented an installation of films and slides including Maurice Lemaître’s *Le Film est déjà commencé?* (1952). Also in collaboration with the Computer Arts Society, German artists Ulrike and Dieter Trüstedt engineered a live audio-visual event, *Electronic Music & Laser Beams* (1973), over another three days, wherein two self-built computerised systems generated acoustic and optical elements, linked in the mind of the viewer—the catalogue promises that ‘synaesthetic correlations are realised’ (Scottish Arts Council, 1973a). Over another two nights, LFMC members Gill Eatherley, Malcolm Le Grice, Annabel Nicolson and William Raban, having first worked together at Gallery House, London in March of that year, performed their ‘Film Action Show’—their collectivisation elsewhere known as *Filmaktion*—in which they each staged expanded cinema pieces, often involving multi-screen environments with degrees of improvisation (Scottish Arts Council, 1973b). The scope of this programme was unprecedented amongst Scottish galleries; never before had this variety of moving image been brought together in one event. Notably absent, however, were Scotland-based voices.²⁸

²⁸ Though Annabel Nicolson might have offered one exception, born in Scotland and having studied at Edinburgh College of Art (1965–1969), her introduction to filmmaking only came during postgraduate study at Saint Martin’s School of Art in 1970 (Reynolds, 2009, p. 86). London, then, became her residence and the LFMC her working context, positioning Nicolson as another expatriate with nominal links to Scotland.



Figure 9: Cover of Scottish Arts Council (1973) *Open Circuit*. Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council. Held at: Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive.

In the video space of the gallery, however, an entirely different set of relations were established: a cohort of film and video professionals were placed in dialogue with viewers, invited to co-produce content for the exhibition via two strands of activity. Firstly, monitors were installed to play tapes recorded in and around the gallery by two roving video crews headed by Jon Schorstein and Pete Warrilow. Trained at the National Film School (1971–1973) and working as a freelancer in Glasgow, Schorstein (quoted in *Scottish Television*, 1973) explained, ‘the Arts Council approached me and offered me the chance to literally play with portable video equipment for a fortnight during the festival.’ Organisers provided an open brief ‘to tape their response to what they see and hear during the Festival’ and the resulting footage was rotated continuously (LG and RB, 1973). With the same instruction, photographers David Pattison and Roger Perry populated the gallery with a collage of prints, similarly processed and updated daily (LG and RB, 1973). Though the content of these tapes is unknown, Schorstein’s colleague Mike Radford (quoted in *Scottish Television*, 1973) declaimed,

What we’re doing here and to a large extent what we do when we’re going around the festival [...] is some of the most incestuous crap I’ve ever been involved with. [...] The limitations of video are very pronounced. It’s rubbish to say that it’s an objective medium. It’s as subjective as anything else, the only difference you have is that you can in fact splay 45 minutes of a picture non-stop, but that doesn’t make it any less of a manipulative medium than the thing that is filming me at this very moment.

Radford's preoccupation with video's failure as a container for truth is typical within the context of early video art and its attachment to semiotics. What his boisterous critique perhaps fails to recognise, however, is the social significance of the liberties gained in the untethering of recording equipment from the ideological authority and physical space of the television studio. That is, whilst the project of these video crews might not have succeeded as a formalist investigation, this work may be better reconciled as a nascent community video practice, prioritising the offer of democratised communication—as championed by Stuart Marshall amongst others.



Figure 10: D. Hall (l) and T. Sinden (r) in Scottish Television (1973) *OPEN CIRCUIT—VIDEO AT FESTIVAL*. [Telecined 16mm film, colour] Held at: Glasgow: National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive. T2271.

Alongside these tapes, the studio also hosted David Hall and his video portrait booth. Showcasing the 'enormous potential and sheer magic of video' (LG and RB, 1973), Hall recorded visitors in situ, able to see their own images replayed on monitors. When interviewed for STV, Hall (quoted in Scottish Television, 1973) reflected that 'it's amazing what people will do when they first look into a TV camera, because they see themselves as they really are and not in a mirror.' In this way, much of the work's value was placed in novelty. Whilst it is similarly difficult to ascertain the extent to which video was here coded or understood as an artform, rather than a technological marvel alone, Hall's facilitation of these portraits provides a precedence for later, similarly interactive closed-circuit works like *Progressive Recession* (1974) and *Vidicon Inscriptions* (1975). The booth comprised a mirrored enclave which by reflection reveals the traditionally off-screen apparatus of video capture (Scottish Television, 1973). Described as a 'kaleidoscope environment' (LG and RB, 1973) this set was designed by Artifactory (1972–1977), a Glasgow-based interior and exhibition design firm founded by John Kraska, known for the eccentric pop-influenced design of The Muscular Arms bar (Scottish Television, 1974; Lobb, 2018).

Both video projects at *Open Circuit* exist somewhere between artwork and documentation. Whilst video remained a novelty, this ambiguity permitted forms of social experimentation free from the burden of an aesthetic tradition. The imperative amongst existing historicisation to recapture video work, however, often looks only to extract that which is encoded as art as warranting the benefit of scholarship. In understanding video at this time, I argue, such an approach wages an undue separation of materially porous forms. Analogous to the hybrid travelogue-cum-artwork films at *Strategy: Get Arts* perhaps, the social interrelations behind video production at *Open Circuit* make its different functions inextricable. This productive ambiguity was, however, short-lived and within a few years, as demonstrated by exhibitions like *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* (Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, 1976), porosity had been substituted for more factional presentations of video practice whose communities had ossified around increasingly entrenched theoretical positions.

Open Circuit marked a number of milestones in Scotland. It was likely the earliest display of video *inside* the gallery and certainly the first time it was produced there. The exhibition also troubles claims amongst historiography that *The Video Show*, two years later, marked what David Curtis (2007, p. 20) describes as ‘the first substantial British survey of the still-new medium.’ Though it may not have presented the spectrum of video practice in its widest sense, *Open Circuit* brokered a highly original encounter between viewers and the technology. Perhaps most unusual, however, was the twofold curatorial strategy of wholly devoting a prime-time exhibition to the moving image, then bringing film and video together—when, as some note, the two had been quite distinct (see Meigh-Andrews, 2006, p. 89). Though divided by allocation of space and function, their co-habitation within the same programme would rarely be repeated until the mid-1980s.

Though *Open Circuit* seemingly failed to attract the attention of any critics, material impacts can be located elsewhere in the provision of equipment in Scotland. In a press release for a subsequent display of tapes, the SAC notes:

After the successful exhibition in 1973 *Open Circuit* [...] the Scottish Arts Council purchased two half-inch portapak. Since then video has been used by the Art Department both as a recording tool for exhibitions and events [...], as a form of documentation of Scottish artists allied with the Artists’ Register, and more recently as a creative medium in its own right. (Scottish Arts Council, 1975)

Having elsewhere budgeted ‘up to £5,000’ (Buchanan, 1973a) for this equipment—approximately £62,000 in 2020—this commitment represented a direct and sizable change in

material resource in Scotland whilst technology remained financially inaccessible. *Open Circuit*, then, left artists with the legitimate possibility of making video.²⁹

Despite their echoic titles and common venue, *Open Circuit* and *Open Cinema* (SAC Gallery, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, 2–6 August 1976) shared different objectives. *Open Cinema* continued to resist the perceived fixity of the traditional exhibition but otherwise enjoyed none of the site-specificity of its predecessor. Curated by Deke Dusinberre of the ACGB, this exhibition was devoted to contemporary examples of expanded cinema by a readymade cohort of LFMC members. In his introduction, Dusinberre (1976, no pagination) writes:

Expanded cinema rejects the standard projection situation of a conventional cinema and utilises an unlimited flexibility to present new ways of looking at movies and specifically at the way the film image can be used either to reinforce or to undermine representation and illusion.

He continues, extolling the radicality of these new techniques which reveal to the viewer the mechanisms behind image construction, from the cinematic apparatus to its mediation of perception. The nine participants included Robert Fearn, Marilyn Halford, Nicky Hamlyn, Tony Hill, Malcolm Le Grice, Annabel Nicolson, William Raban, Jane Rigby and Tony Sinden.³⁰ In a schedule updated daily, elaborate environments manipulating the physicality of projection, screens, sound, shadow and using techniques like re-filming, repetition and chance showcased expanded cinema as a carrefour of filmmaking, performance and sculpture. In its selection, however, the exhibition perpetuated a relatively singular account of experimental filmmaking, articulated through just one community.

Though it made no claim upon broader representation, as an inherently summative endeavour, *Open Cinema* correlated avant-gardism with one metropolitan centre. The omission of local context in the selection of participants extended through the exhibition's interpretation of site-specificity. Though, as Dusinberre (1976, no pagination) explains, 'the artists had to confront the specific demands of space at Charlotte Square,' in practice this meant the architecture of the gallery. Engagement with an Edinburgh viewership or surrounding festival context was reserved in comparison to the participative relationship enjoyed by *Open Circuit*. These differences fed through their respective branding, one contextualised by a sober, imageless catalogue, the other by an elaborate folio of Xeroxed

²⁹ Work produced with this equipment included Tamara Krikorian's video installation *Breeze* (1975).

³⁰ Le Grice, Nicolson, Raban and Sinden having also shown three years earlier at *Open Circuit*.

text and image, its Artfactory-designed cover imitating a cartoonish television, complete with acetate screen.

Programme			
<u>Monday 2nd August</u>	12-6pm	Tony Sinden	Vacant Possession
<u>Tuesday 3rd August</u>	10-6pm	Annabel Nicolson	Some Paradoxes
" " "	11 and 3pm	Nicky Hamlyn	4 x Loops Window Cloister Camera/Movements Sundial
<u>Wednesday 4th August</u>	10-6pm	Robert Fearn	Parallelogram
" " "	12 and 3pm	Tony Hill	Open Your Eyes
<u>Thursday 5th August</u>	10-6pm	Jane Rigby	Here to There
" " "	12 and 3pm	Malcolm Le Grice	Joseph's Coat Berlin Horse
<u>Friday 6th August</u>	10-6pm	William Raban	2.45
" " "	12 and 3pm	Marilyn Halford	Performance

Figure 11: Scottish Arts Council (1976) *Open Cinema*. Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council. Held at: Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive.

2.3.3 The Glasgow Centre, Blythswood Square

Between 1973 and 1976 several developments reflected a growth, and splintering, of moving image practices in Britain. In London, *The Video Show* brokered representation for the medium within the art establishment; London Video Arts was formed by members including David Hall, Tamara Krikorian, Stephen Partridge and Stuart Marshall in summer 1976 (Hatfield, 2005a); and Peter Gidal's *Structural Film Anthology* (1976) consolidated a theory and practice for the Structural/Materialist movement. In Scotland, the same period witnessed a challenge to Edinburgh's hegemony as the centre of cultural activity. Although the SAC's Glasgow Centre predated its Charlotte Square gallery (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1967, p. 36, 1969, p. 45), the concentration of their most progressive efforts had long been tied to the Edinburgh Festival season. Under the stewardship of Ian Black and playwright Tom McGrath, however, the Glasgow Centre would develop moving image exhibition facilities with a greater emphasis on local production. Those staff would lead a significant rebalancing, ultimately deposing Edinburgh as the exclusive seat of an avant-garde in Scotland.



Figure 12: McGrath, T. (1973) *Allen Ginsberg*, 10 August. [½ inch EIAJ videotape, black and white] Held at: Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Arts, The Glasgow Miracle: Materials for Alternative Histories Archive. TE2/1973/142.

At the Glasgow Centre, McGrath used the SAC's new Nivico portapak to record performances by poets Allen Ginsberg (1973, TE2/1973/140–143) and Adrian Mitchell (1973, TE2/1973/107), alongside talks from Sri Chinmoy (1973, TE2/1973/69; 1975, TE2/1975/67–68), Chinua Achebe (1975, TE2/1975/137–138) and Edwin Morgan (1975, TE2/1975/114).³¹ Their first foray into moving image exhibition, however, began in May 1973 with a two-part programme, *Glasgow Film Makers*, comprising twenty-two works by filmmakers including Mike Alexander, Bill Forsyth, Lesley Keen and Jon Schorstein.³² Invitations were made by Black and Schorstein to filmmakers to screen 'any of your 16mm films which you care to submit' (Schorstein, 1973a). Ambivalent to content, the programme was structured as such to represent a network. Statements from participants accompanied the work, informally situating films within their professional contexts. Though not couched in avant-garde language, the grouping reconciles an approach to filmmaking of a distinctly non-commercial character united in its address of shared themes.

³¹ Digitised, these tapes and others are now available via The Glasgow Miracle: Materials for Alternative Histories Archive.

³² Mike Alexander (*The Bodyguard*, 1968; *The Family*, 1969; *The Poet*, 1970; *The Gardener*, 1971; *Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday*, n.d.), Mike Bolland (*Mind Your Fingers*, 1971; *What War?*, 1973), Robin Crichton (*George Joins the Professionals*, n.d.), Bert Eeles and Tom Hilton (*How to Win the War Against Progress*, n.d.), Bill Forsyth (*Waterloo*, c.1968), Ken Heritage (*A Coat of Thorns*, n.d.), Charles Jamieson (*Portable Stream Orchestras*, n.d.), Lesley Keen (*How to Win the War Against Noise*, c.1973), Jon Schorstein (*KH-4*, 1969; *Mirror*, 1970; *Disque Blues*, 1971; *Beaconsfield*, 1971; *Passing Time*, 1972), Willie Stott (*Parking Place*, 1970; *Puppet: No Strings Attached*, 1972; *Phoenix*, 1973) and David Thomson (*Dream Weaver*, n.d.) (*Glasgow Film Makers*, 1973).



Figure 13: B. Forsyth in Schorstein, J. (1969) *KH-4*. [16mm film, black and white] Held at: Glasgow: National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive, 3631.

Taking its title from its German film stock, Schorstein's *KH-4* (1969), for instance, was independently produced for the sum of £150 (Scottish Arts Council, 1977c). Over twelve short minutes, it follows a young Bill Forsyth as an artist in crisis at the edge of modernity, roaming the streets of Glasgow as tenements and heavy industry collapse, clearing space for the high rise and its utopian promise (Schorstein, 1969). 'Occasionally he nips home to paint his comments,' Schorstein (1973b) writes. Describing *Puppet: No Strings Attached* (1972), meanwhile, Willie Stott (1973) explains that it 'concerns the decay or "lack of decay" of the church, in a modern, selfish, capitalistic society.' Ken Heritage's *A Coat of Thorns* (n.d.) follows 'a shy, sensitive, 15-year-old boy from the islands, brought to live in the city' (Heritage, 1973). Alexander's *The Gardener* (1971) featured 'a lonely young gardener' who 'dreams of death during his solitary routine' (Alexander, 1973). And Bolland writes of *Mind Your Fingers* (1971):

anyone who has to walk amidst the noise and smell of the city's traffic might have made this film. I thought of it one Thursday morning as I fought my way through the diesel fumes. [...] I suppose it's a sort of culmination of thoughts on every cliché you're ever likely to hear about the motor car—'it's a terrible threat' or 'it's the new religion.' (Bolland, 1973)

Though few of these works are archived and accessible, their descriptions alone evidence considerable crossover. Many express a frustrated experience with the corrupted modern world, industry and religion often via the white, male lone wanderer figure, a proxy for the filmmaker. These films engage the trope of Clydesidism with degrees of criticality. Against the backdrop of Edward Heath's Conservative government (1970–1974) which refused to subsidise the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders consortium, leading to its liquidation in 1971, these

films were produced in an increasingly politicised, left-wing culture which manifests in preoccupations with decay, death and naturalism. Whilst occasionally overearnest, as *KH-4* seems, their depictions of austerity align them with a European political avant-garde more than the structuralism of the co-op movement. The films' credits also reveal a deeply collaborative approach to production, with filmmakers appearing as actors, editors and cameramen in each other's work.

GLASGOW FILM MAKERS			
1	DREAM WEAVER	DAVE THOMSON	OPT
2	PARKING PLACE	WILHE STOTT	SEP
3	PUPPET - NO STINGS	WILHE STOTT	SEP
4	KH 4	JON SCHORSTEIN	OPT
5	MIRROR	JON SCHORSTEIN	SEP
6	DISQUE BLUES	JON SCHORSTEIN / BILL FORSYTH	SEP
7	BEAconsfield	JON SCHORSTEIN	SEP
8	WATERLOO	BILL FORSYTH	SEP
9	COAT OF THORNS	KEN HERIAGE	SEP
10	HOW TO WIN THE WAR AGAINST PROGRESS	BERT EYLES / TOM HILTON	SEP
11	MIND YOUR FINGERS	MIKE BOLLAND	SEP
12	THE BODY GUARD	MIKE ALEXANDER	OPT
13	THE FAMILY	MIKE ALEXANDER	OPT
14	THE GARDENER	MIKE ALEXANDER	OPT

PART TWO			
15	FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY, MONDAY	MIKE ALEXANDER	COM
16	THE POET	MIKE ALEXANDER	OPT
17	WHAT WAR?	MIKE BOLLAND	COM
18	GEORGE JOINS THE PROFESSIONALS	ROBIN ORCHTON	COM
19	HOW TO WIN THE WAR AGAINST NOISE	LESLEY H. KEEN	COM
20	PORTABLE STEAM ORCHESTRAS	CHARLES JAMIESON	COM
21	PHOENIX	WILHE STOTT	SEP
22	PASSING TIME	JON SCHORSTEIN	OPT

Figure 14: *Glasgow Film Makers* (1973). [Photocopied schedule] Held at: Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Arts, The Glasgow Miracle: Materials for Alternative Histories Archive.

Though these overlaps might allude to an organised movement, there is scant evidence of further group screenings. An unaccommodating infrastructure of exhibition opportunity and funding, I reason, obstructed the ability of such a network to coalesce around the pursuit of a certain mode of filmmaking. A pattern is also apparent in the trajectory of these practitioners in their dispersal by the necessity of extranational education and employment. Robin MacPherson (2014, p. 36) notes that, ‘until the advent of [...] Scottish public funding for film production in the early 1980s, Scots could only pursue a film-making career or any kind of formal training in England or overseas.’ Schorstein and Forsyth, for instance, studied at the National Film School, Beaconsfield (*Glasgow Film Makers*, 1973), and Keen, working in animation, trained at communist Czechoslovakia’s Barrandov Studios (Keen, 2020). This cohort would pursue more commercial routes thereafter in roles at the BBC and Channel 4, or in the founding of small production companies, including Persistent Vision (Keen), Smith-Schorstein (Schorstein) and Pelicula Films (Alexander).

Perhaps more than anyone else, the trajectory of Forsyth, who achieved mainstream success with features *That Sinking Feeling* (1979) and *Gregory's Girl* (1981), testifies to the lost potential of this would-be avant-garde. In his description of *Waterloo* (c.1968), he writes,

There is no storyline to the film, in a sense the film itself is the story. [...] It's quite a demanding film [...] it requires you to think, or at least tune in, for its duration, but if you've ever had déjà-vu, or if you've ever felt lonely with a loved-one far away, or if you like Jim Reeves or JS Bach, or if you like looking at trees, or if you've ever looked down on Glasgow from a great height and wondered, then I think and I hope that you'll get something from this film. (Forsyth, 1973)

Hinting at the film's non-linearity and a sense of structural enquiry, Forsyth's pursuit of poetry over narrative aligns the work closely with avant-garde approaches. In a later interview, Forsyth (quoted in Teeman, 2008, p. 13) corroborates this view, stating 'I was in love with film itself, the tangible stuff, the celluloid.' Allan Hunter (1990, p. 153) describes how *Waterloo* takes 'a vigorously anti-narrative approach to its subject,' including 'two ten-minute shots within its forty-five minute running time.' This indulgent experimentalism, however, was not met without resistance from Scottish audiences. Hunter (1990, p. 153) adds that when it screened at Edinburgh International Film Festival, 'it cleared the George Square Theatre almost as quickly as a fire alarm.' Forsyth (quoted in Hunter, 1990, p. 153) explains, 'there was a Tam O'Shanter cartoon on before and someone else had made a film about St Kilda bird life. It was actually more thrilling than disappointing or painful to have that kind of effect on an audience.' The hostile response *Waterloo* met, as Forsyth (quoted in Teeman, 2008, p. 13) viewed it, made plain a choice:

Either I would [...] spend the following decades tenaciously developing what was finally manifest as the gallery video-installation genre, or I make that slow backwards retreat into conventional cinema. We know what happened. To think that I might now have been the grand old man of international video art.

It is productive to consider what factors led this generation to pursue the latter. Following the 1973 screening, Black (1973) wrote to each of the filmmakers remarking 'I think it could be described as an artistic success, a qualified technical success, and financially a flop'—the SAC had only made £9.30 from tickets. Less an indictment of artistic choices, this wanting response perhaps reflected the underdevelopment of an experimental film culture writ large. Organisers' failure to broker a viewership, then, exposed a systemic lack of provision in film education and exhibition at this time. Black (1973) promised to write 'regarding future film projects,' but any direct reprise seemingly failed to materialise.

In 1974 the SAC commissioned an Artists Register which provides useful insight into the limited scale and diversity of artistic practice in Scotland. Though the document states that *artists* ‘embraces not only painters, sculptors and printmakers but the whole spectrum of the visual arts including photographers, film-makers, theatre designers and weavers’ (Scottish Arts Council, c.1974a), only three of 150 individuals count filmmaking amongst their media: George Donald, Ronald Forbes, Eduardo Paolozzi—none *Glasgow Film Makers* participants. Therein a distinction is drawn between artists who work with film and filmmakers proper.



Figure 15: Forbes, R. (1974) *Between Dreams*. [16mm film, colour].

I have discussed Paolozzi’s surviving 16mm work but the films of Donald and Forbes have received little attention. No record of the former’s filmmaking has been found, though better represented, Forbes occupies an unusual position for this period.³³ In a video profile recorded by Schorstein with the SAC’s equipment, Forbes (quoted in Schorstein, 1973c) explains,

I sometimes feel that painting is a very anachronistic activity. I usually swear, at least once a year, that I’ll give it up in favour of something else. I think I’ve reconciled that situation somewhat with making my ideas in painting, film and so on, fit together, so they complement each other.

Indicating a porous view of disciplines, Forbes treated the techniques of painting and film interchangeably: he describes marking celluloid directly with a blade and tracing projections to create painterly compositions (Schorstein, 1973c). The works itself often concerned the exchange of media, or the mediation of one discipline through the other. In *Between Dreams* (1974) this occurs in both directions: on-screen, found images are remediated through painting in wavy horizontal lines that invoke video signal; elsewhere, collaged layers of cut-out illustration and printed matter treat the film frame as a canvas or work surface (Forbes,

³³ Forbes’ work in film includes *Between Dreams* (16mm, 1974), *She* (16mm, 1974), *TV 74* (Super 8, 1974) *Portfolio* (16mm, 1975), *Behaviour Patterns* (16mm, 1976), *Signs* (16mm, 1976–1977), *Incident* (16mm, 1978), *Two Painters* (16mm, 1978), *Happy Day* (16mm, 1979), and *Three Artists* (16mm, 1982).

1974). In shifting processes of image-making between disciplines, Forbes brings certain attention to the formal implications that each media has on viewing. In this way, *Between Dreams* echoes the concerns of the English structuralist filmmaking movement, though perhaps lacking its conceptual elegance. Opening, for instance, with an image of a woman's naked torso, overlaid with a gloved hand fondling an apple and orange analogously, the film's voiceover muses on artistic inspiration; 'I am a machine for recycling images [...] they are then sorted and filed in the mind, where they later can be examined, stripped down, rebuilt and rearranged to provide a moment of calm in an hour of consternation' (Forbes, 1974). The film's progressive aesthetic claims aren't met by progressive politics—instead, the myth of male genius is propagated in ways which enjoy a less sympathetic reception now, arguably reflecting something of Scotland's cultural monoculture.

Forbes, however, remained a notable advocate for film's artistic potential, consulting with officials on the equipment and costs required in production. Paraphrased in unauthored meeting notes, he offers shrewd insight into the factors which have impeded its development in Scotland, describing a causality dilemma of appetite and provision (i.e. equipment and education) which usefully contextualises the poor turnout at events like *Glasgow Film*

Makers:

What a painting-oriented artist wants to do with film is in a self-defining category of its own. It was difficult to see at present how great a need there was for film equipment for such purposes, but he felt sure that once the equipment was available, many artists would want to use it. The purchasing of equipment would therefore be a stimulus. ('Talk with Ronald Forbes,' n.d.)

Though Forbes was an outlier in his interdisciplinary approach, he wasn't entirely alone. In the same meeting notes, the unnamed author notes that Robert Callender was recently awarded £1,000 from the SAC with some intention of buying video equipment ('Talk with Ronald Forbes,' n.d.). At an event organised by Alexander Moffat, *Four Days of Film and Video* (New 57 Gallery, 24–27 November 1975), Callender screened two 8mm films: *Weather* (1975) and *Shoreline* (1975).³⁴ Listed as a painter in the Artists Register, he was better-known for mixed-media reliefs and assemblages comprised of beachcombed objects. These films were an evident extension of this ecological practice, recording the patterns and

³⁴ Also shown were McGrath's tapes of performances by Allen Ginsberg, Adrian Mitchell and Morton Feldman.

movements of environmental forces. Callender (quoted in New 57 Gallery, 1975) explains that *Shoreline*,

was originally intended for the ‘Scope’ Film Competition, but I rejected it on the ground that the excessive editing required to reduce it to the 8 minutes time limit set, would destroy the long sequences of wave movement, which with the colour, mood, weather, and textures gives Storer its own personality. [...] For me this film bridges the gap between reality and my drawings and paintings over the past 3 years.

Though his filmmaking seems short-lived, Callender here demonstrates a conceptual view of practice in which different media are mobilised in pursuit of a singular idea, invoking an interdisciplinarity which would connect a much later generation of artists in Scotland.

Shoreline was developed as an entry to the Scope Film Competition (c.1972–1974), also noted as the context for which *Puppet: No Strings Attached*, *A Coat of Thorns* and *What War?* were produced (*Glasgow Film Makers*, 1973), whilst Forbes’ *Between Dreams* had been a prize winner in the same scheme (Forbes, 2012). Organised by BBC Scotland in conjunction with the Scottish Film Council, the competition awarded up to £750 in prize money and the ‘opportunity to direct a BBC film crew for one week’ to make a film for *Scope* (*Scottish International Review*, 1973, p. 4), a weekly arts review presented and produced by W. Gordon Smith. The competition is compelling in that it evidently stimulated production, amongst artists and amateurs alike—Ian Craven (2009, p. 333) elsewhere highlights it within a chronology of amateur cinema. Encouraging experimentation, Stott (1973) even wrote that he made *Puppet* ‘deliberately avant-garde, as I felt at the time the winning film would be of an ultra-arty form.’ Though eluding further records, the competition’s repeated citation and embrace of differing modes of practice warrant further study, particularly as it related to moving image production and indeed reception.

2.4 The Third Eye Centre, 1975–1979

In May 1975, the Scottish Arts Council's Glasgow Centre was replaced by a new space in a converted wallpaper warehouse on Sauchiehall Street. Headed by Tom McGrath, the Third Eye Centre would be a 'legally independent' organisation with two large galleries and a progressive programme of exhibitions and events (McGrath, 1976a, p. 15). Writing about the move, he describes the conservatism into which the TEC arrived:

In Glasgow there has never been any questioning of the validity of the art object and little discussion of the role of an avant-garde. [...] The city is too small and crowded to allow separate communities of artists to develop, and the main community contains very few people with a taste for the modern and experimental. (1976a, p. 14)

With this diagnosis, McGrath was perhaps better prepared in his intervention than the financial flop of events like the *Glasgow Film Makers* screening had proven. In this campaign to broker space for experimentation, video would form a central tool.

During preparations for the TEC's opening, *The Video Show* was also in development. Discussions about the exhibition's touring had been initiated by Serpentine Gallery director Sue Grayson, with a schedule slated to include the TEC amongst venues like Modern Art Oxford and the Arnolfini, Bristol ('Video Show Tour,' 1975). In May 1975, however, McGrath (1975a) began to signal doubts: 'plans for the video show seem to have gone agley. I understand that our two selectors didn't like any of the material! I wonder if the situation can be salvaged.' Then, following the Arnolfini screening in July (Grayson, 1975), he pulled the TEC's involvement, declaring 'I am not going to do anything further about videotape. I have more than enough to keep me busy' (McGrath, 1975b). It seems, however, that alternative plans were afoot. Within two months McGrath began developing the TEC's own landmark video show, *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* (1976) (Prokopoff, 1975), and in November hosted *What's it to You?* (1975), a video installation by Glasgow-born artist Elsa Stansfield and her Dutch partner Madelon Hooykaas.

What's it to You?, the duo explain, is a '2-monitor video event with photographs and participation' (White Bird, 1976). Malcolm Dickson (2019, p. 69) suggests that the work represented 'quite possibly the first video experiment in a public gallery space in the city, if not Scotland.' Though preceded by David Hall's video booth at *Open Circuit* by two years, the installation is distinct in its explicit encoding as an artwork. Dickson (2019, p. 69) describes the setup:

It linked two monitors playing tapes from the Barras flea market in the East End of the city with the arts centre, situated on one of the busiest shopping streets of the city, Sauchiehall Street. A third monitor teased passers-by to stop; a camera was offered to record viewers thoughts, and materials for them to write their comments, which were in turn displayed alongside the photographic panels.

The novelty of seeing oneself on screen, familiar to earlier projects, continued to underpin this work. This interactivity or *dialogic* condition is echoed in the installation's title which, Dickson (2019, p. 69) adds, refers to the hostile vernacular call-and-response of *how are you?* and its reply *what's it to you?* Moving beyond formal enquiry alone, towards a community-oriented application, the work advocated for the democratising potential of video. Tamara Krikorian (1976a, p. 27) argues that it 'successfully brought discussion back to the level of what video is all about: a tool which, if skilfully handled, offers an alternative to the broadcast mode.' Though based in London, Stansfield/Hooykaas maintained close links with McGrath, exchanging proposals and feedback on *The Road* (1976), which examined the effects of social partition caused by the construction Glasgow's New City Road, later presented in the exhibition *Journeys* (Whitechapel Gallery, London, 1976), and *Close to Home* (1977), an unrealised community arts project (Stansfield and Hooykaas, 1975, 1977).

2.4.1 Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic (1976)

If *What's it to You?* offered Glasgow viewers an introduction to developments in the new artistic medium of video, then *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* (16–21 March 1976) represented an attempt to bring forth its every possibility. A collaboration between the TEC and SAC, organisers understood this exhibition as an expansion upon previous engagements with the medium. The catalogue introduction explained that the SAC's 'association with video has been a history of doubtful success and thought provoking failures' and 'this exhibition is an attempt to evaluate that particular world' (Buchanan, 1976). Advertised as 'a six day event of Video installations, performances and tapes from British and foreign Video-artists' (Third Eye Centre, 1976), the exhibition was curated by Tamara Krikorian with the support of Lesley Greene of the SAC, Tom McGrath and Andrew Porter of the TEC.

Resident in Edinburgh from 1966 to 1981, Krikorian was a prominent video artist and critic, becoming a leading promoter of video in Scotland through her work with the SAC. Working in theatre at first, her introduction to video came whilst serving as an archivist at the SAC (Scottish Arts Council, 1979; Hatfield, 2005b, p. 2). Krikorian was charged with utilising the SAC's two new portapak to 'document artists ideas about themselves and their work in

connection with the Artists Register [1974]’ (Greene, 1976b).³⁵ At the suggestion of SAC art director William Buchanan, she made her first video installation, *Breeze* (1975), with the same equipment (Krikorian, 1975). Thereafter she arranged the exhibition of these tapes and her own work at *The Video Show* (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975).

Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic unfolded across the TEC, spilling out from the galleries and into the café, main entrance, corridor space and dressing room (Greene, 1976a). The exhibition comprised ten installations and several tapes from videomakers, UK-based and international. These installations included Roger Bernard’s *Corridor* (n.d.), David Critchley’s *Yet Another Triangle* (1975), David Hall’s *Vidicon Inscriptions* (1975) and *Waterwork (Narcissus)* (1976), Brian Hoey’s *Videvent* (1975), Stuart Marshall’s *Privileged View* (1976), Stephen Partridge’s *No. 1 1976* (1976), Trevor Pollard’s *Car-Car* (n.d.) and Tony Sinden’s *Behold Vertical Devices* (1974). Sharing concerns with earlier video projects, these works primarily concerned the viewer’s relationship to the apparatus itself.

Marshall’s *Privileged View*, for instance, occupied the dressing room and comprised two monitors, one displaying a script being typed, and the other featuring footage of the room itself, arranged as a meeting space, complete with documents, photographs and ephemera scattered over a central table (LUX Moving Image, 2005). In this way, the viewer—now in an area of the building normally off limits—was made to feel conspiratorial, as though they had stumbled upon a secretive plot. Marshall employs video here as a pseudo-surveillance system, attempting to elicit feelings of paranoia and voyeurism within the viewer and illustrating therein the technology’s capacity to breach private and public spheres. Reporting on the event, Krikorian (1976a, p. 27) describes being ‘made almost painfully conscious of being the viewer.’

In the gallery, David Hall’s *Vidicon Inscriptions* exploited the technological defect of image burn to overlay live images of viewers, generating a palimpsest of interactions. As Catherine Elwes (2015, p. 239) explains, ‘when pointed at a bright source of light the camera was quickly overloaded and the image “burned,” leaving a ghostly double of itself permanently etched onto the vidicon tube.’ Here, Stephen Partridge also presented his first installation, *No. 1 1976*, which used closed-circuit technology to create disorienting video feedback loops.

³⁵ Including profiles on Mike Esson (1973), Barbara Balmer (1974), Fred Bushe (1974), John Byrne (1974) and the *Gable Ends* mural project (1974).

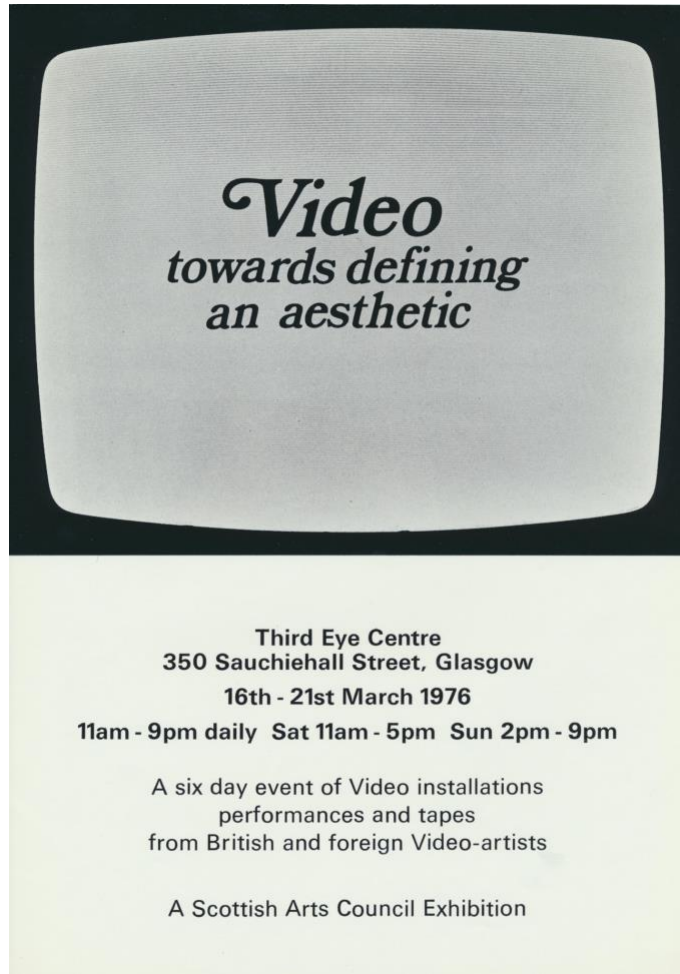


Figure 16: Third Eye Centre (1976) *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic*. [Poster] Held at: Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Arts, The Glasgow Miracle: Materials for Alternative Histories Archive.

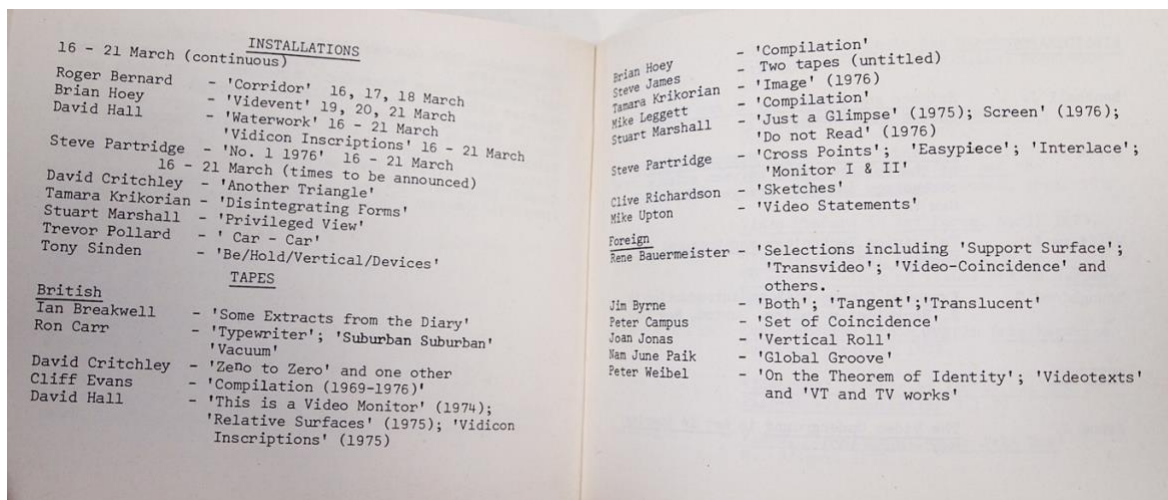


Figure 17: List of works in Scottish Arts Council (1976) *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic*. Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council. Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

A cluster of four monitors on a head-height plinth, oriented outwards and each facing a different direction, would display live images from strategically placed cameras. In effect, this meant that the viewer's own image could only be seen to themselves indirectly, twice-mediated by the monitor display.

The exhibition's unorthodox mobilisation of the entire building provoked surprising results. It allegedly attracted over 4,000 visitors (Caldwell, 1986, p. 10), and, as Krikorian (1976a, p. 27) reflects, 'turned up a lot of unexpected observations about space: the presentation of art objects inside and outside a gallery.' Whilst *Vidicon Inscriptions* had, for example, reportedly 'worked well in the gallery,' had it been in a public space, Krikorian (1976a, p. 27) suspects, 'it would become less of an art work and more direct.' Free from the behavioural expectations of the gallery space, installations like Brian Hoey's *Videvent*, located at the main entrance, bore witness to viewers 'riding bicycles and doing handstands in front of it' (Krikorian, 1976a, p. 27), configuring therein a more dynamic relationship with its audience. In the same year that critic Brian O'Doherty (1976) published his critique of the white cube, dissecting the spatial practices which seek to reify the art object and extract it from quotidian experience, *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* was engaged in the undoing of display conventions, brokering an interface between the domain of art and the outside world.



Figure 18: Documentation of Partridge, S. (1976) *No.1 1976*. [Photograph] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

Through its showcase of international tapes, the exhibition also sought to link local activity with video as a global phenomenon. Featuring landmark works by Joan Jonas (*Vertical Roll*, 1972) and Nam June Paik (*Global Groove*, 1973) alongside contributions from Rene Bauermeister, James Byrne, Peter Campus and Peter Weibel, the selection testifies to its curators' degree of ambition and attention to international developments. In correspondence

with Stephen Prokopoff, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, McGrath solicited the tour of the Korean American video pioneer Nam June Paik's *TV Garden* (1974–1977) (Prokopoff, 1975), an installation of thirty monitors all playing *Global Groove*, embedded within a landscape of tropical foliage, later shown at Documenta 6 (1977). In further correspondence with Paik himself, offers were extended to participate in both the exhibition and symposium (McGrath, 1975c). Though these invitations failed to materialise any in-person involvement, the screening of *Global Groove* asserted a confident international context for the exhibition. Featuring images appropriated from politics, commerce and culture, collapsed together in a hallucinatory stream of visual information that caricatured television's flattening of human sensorial experience, the tape was a rare example of colour video technology amidst an otherwise formally austere, monochromatic programme.

2.4.2 *The Future of Video in Scotland* (1976)

On the Saturday ahead of the exhibition, Krikorian and John Adams, Regional Officer at the Scottish Film Council, convened a one-day symposium, *The Future of Video in Scotland* (13 March 1976), held at the Glasgow Film Theatre. The event's proceedings are captured in a transcript which records in detail the overlapping concerns of the medium's growing usership. Introduced by Edinburgh International Film Festival director Lynda Myles and chaired by Stuart Hood, then Professor of Film and Television at the Royal College of Art, the symposium featured papers by artist Su Braden, Anne Duffy (Quality of Life Experiment, Dumbarton), David Hall, Jim Pearse (Yorkshire Arts Association Communication Centre), Hein Reedijk (Rotterdam Arts Foundation) and Richard Reynish (Edinburgh Video Access) (Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Film Council, 1976, pp. iii–iv). In this way, 'video activists and artists,' as Myles (quoted in Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Film Council, 1976, p. 1) described them, were afforded relatively equal footing.

Much of the discussion that followed concerned a tentative articulation of the definitions and boundaries of the emerging technology. Hall (quoted in Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Film Council, 1976, p. 5) laid out an unease with the term *video artist*, in that those described as such 'are very conscious of the need to expand the context of art,' suggesting that association with the traditional plastic arts was a disservice to video's social potentials. Video art, for Hall, was intrinsically bound to the television broadcast and could be appraised by the success of critique thereof. For Braden, a member of the Wandsworth Aylesbury Community Arts Group, video had offered a means of training and creative expression for the

disadvantaged community of London’s Aylesbury Estate, a large housing scheme then nearing completion. Here the technology enabled community ownership of a creative process, from production to distribution: ‘a very exciting new social function,’ as Braden (quoted in Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Film Council, 1976, p. 10) saw it, which promised agency for the disenfranchised. Similarly, in the Quality of Life Experiment, West Dunbartonshire (QLE, 1974–1976) video was being used as part of a multidisciplinary government initiative aimed at improving cultural life in the community. For six weeks, programmes made by residents of the Vale of Leven were to be broadcast to a local audience of up to 6,000 homes (Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Film Council, 1976, pp. 10–11). A lo-fi enterprise, *Vale TV*, as it was called, offered a platform for largely unmediated communication from groups such as the local trades council. In this application, as Duffy (quoted in Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Film Council, 1976, p. 11) reflects, ‘video is simply a means to an end and I don’t think it’s an end in itself.’

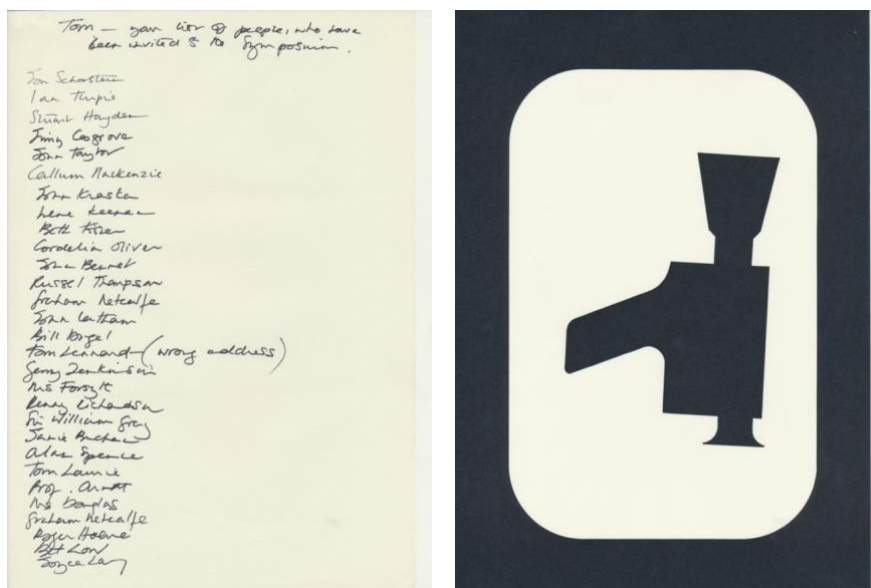


Figure 19: List of invitees, including J. Schorstein, J. Kraska, C. Oliver and J. Latham; cover of Scottish Arts Council (1976) *The Future of Video in Scotland*. [Transcript] Held at: Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Arts, The Glasgow Miracle: Materials for Alternative Histories Archive.

Though the symposium recorded little intersection amongst these applications, common concerns were identified. Hall (Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Film Council, 1976, p. 18) noted that the use of any helical scan—the system of videotape recording found in the low-gauge video equipment used by artists and activists alike, e.g. ½ inch EIAJ videotape—had been blocked by the Association of Broadcasting and Allied Staffs (ABS) union, excluding such material from broadcast. In this way, broadcast media and its ‘obsession with technical excellence’ (1976, p. 18) is posited as one unifying antagonist. Significantly, the symposium

was also held against the backdrop of Glasgow Educational Television's (ETV) imminent closure. An innovative closed-circuit television network, transmitting educational programming via cable to schools in the council region since 1965, ETV represented a utopian alternative to national broadcast infrastructure, clearly valued as a community asset. With noted consensus, speakers and attendees of the symposium decried its defunding, demonstrating further solidarity in the view that localised media was an essential service.³⁶

A familiar refrain was also found in the plea for enhanced provision, voiced by many at the symposium but also expressed by Lesley Greene in the catalogue to the exhibition. In a short overview, mapping a lineage from *Locations Edinburgh* to the present, Greene (1976b) diagnoses the dichotomous problem of too few resources and 'sporadic and haphazard' pressure from artists:

Access not only to equipment but to other people and ideas engaged seriously in the same medium will be of paramount importance in stimulating a situation where an aesthetic may react and develop on responsive and fertile ground.

As artistic, industrial and educational uses of video each gained traction, these demands were met in a number of ways. To the question of *equipment*: as the TEC exhibition was underway, Adams, Reynish and Alison Nealon were compiling the first comprehensive survey of video facilities in Scotland.³⁷ Tasked with the preparation of a 'report on video facilities in education, the arts, community work and training departments of industry and commerce' and to 'provide information for all users and potential users,' the resulting publication provides a precise, empirical map of the technology's uptake in Scotland by 1976 (Adams, Nealon and Reynish, 1976, p. 1). Of over 200 users of videotape identified, sixty-five were based in Strathclyde, fifty-two in Lothian, and twenty in Grampian (1976, p. 3), indicating a significant concentration in metropolitan centres. It resolved the most common uses were education contexts, followed by applications in medicine and sport for observing behaviours and performance (1976, p. 4). Only fifteen users nationally were engaged in 'other public' uses, encompassing community and artistic purposes indiscriminately (1976, p. 3). Almost a decade after the market introduction of the portapak, the report offers a sense of the minor scale of video's adoption in Scotland, smaller still in the realm of experimental practices.

³⁶ Following the video symposium, the TEC hosted an exhibition of photographs, programmes and a studio set from Glasgow Educational Television as part of the campaign to prevent its closure (Oliver, 1976a, p. 8).

³⁷ Research was undertaken over a three-month period, from January to March 1976.

To the question of *people and ideas*: following the exhibition and symposium, Krikorian, Adams and McGrath coordinated a new discursive forum titled Video Link, ‘a special meeting on video (art and community), expanded cinema and artists films’ (McGrath, 1976b). At its first convening (27 October 1976), it sought to assess what equipment was available between attendees and discuss the areas of distribution and exhibition. This was attended primarily by educational and community-based users including representatives from the QLE, University of Glasgow and University of Strathclyde. Following discussion around equipment resource, minutes from that meeting record some ideological division amongst attendees (*Report on First Meeting*, 1976). Advocating for the artist, Krikorian suggested that ‘the quality of the videotape produced must be given priority at the expense of quantity,’ to which Oliver Bennet (QLE), ‘was not convinced’ (*Report on First Meeting*, 1976). Here the artistic potential of video was set in subtle opposition to its potential for democratising communication. Despite McGrath’s overture that ‘perhaps the artists might be linked to the community’ (*Report on First Meeting*, 1976), Video Link came to reflect the deepening factions of video art and video activism that, as A.L. Rees (2011a, p. 97) and others have noted, developed throughout the 1970s.

The symposium and exhibition marked a shift in organised engagements with video in Scotland, from the SAC’s brokering of novel encounters with the technology to the facilitation of discursive, practitioner-led activities that probed deeper. I would argue that these events contributed to an emerging critical mass, which—following five years of intermittent engagement—initiated a short period of more sustained attention. Only one year prior had *What’s it to You?* successfully blended the formalist experiment with a communitarian ethic, offering a model for more synergistic practice. By the end of 1976, however, these two modes had become seemingly irreconcilable. Reporting on recent events for *Studio International*, Krikorian (1976a, p. 27) noted that ‘there has been a commitment in Scotland which at times has been lacking elsewhere. The under-developed area, regretfully, is on the community side of video, apart from the projected Vale of Leven cable experiment.’ Placing the two factions into something of an arms race, Krikorian’s observation, perhaps skewed by vested interests, would find itself contested in the events which followed.

In 1975, the SAC had expanded its exhibition-making in Edinburgh into the Fruit Market Gallery, a complex shared with the artist-run New 57 Gallery and Edinburgh Printmakers (Oliver, 1975). Here, in January 1977, they organised a week-long event titled *Organised*

Accident is Art which brought together community art practitioners nationwide. Alongside discussions on community theatre, festivals, printmaking and murals, video was accorded its own seminar chaired by Adams (Williams, 1977). A report on this session documents an agreement between the twenty-five attendees to ‘avoid the dangers of too vague, generalised discussion’ (‘Video,’ 1977, p. 1), suggesting demand for more advanced debate on the applications of the medium. The discussion which followed concerned the politics of representation, with case studies of video projects in the housing schemes like the Aylesbury Estate and in Pilton, Edinburgh, being met with fury in their perpetuation of ‘middle-class values and attitudes to a community where they were utterly inappropriate’ (1977, p. 2). The event affirmed the importance of placing cameras ‘in the hands of the people’ (1977, p. 2), even at the expense of quality, as the best means of creating an emancipated media. Some argued that while communities should decide upon content, ‘the new techniques should be left to the artists and BBC people’ (1977, p. 2). In this way, *Organised Accident is Art* stoked further division between video factions. Despite the intention of progressing critical discussion, the event’s co-organiser, Madeleine Williams (1977) conceded privately that across the week ‘lots of the talk was a bit disappointing and pretty predictable and superficial’ and in one review, Cordelia Oliver (1977) declared that *organised* ‘is not the first word that comes to mind.’ Though such events intended to move discourse forward, their findings were often circuitous. Invariably, these symposia involved the same group of SAC/SFC associates in changing configurations, lending a uniformity to their contents.

By the late 1970s, however, the SAC’s monopoly on the visual arts began to unwind. Though its regime had been particularly benevolent to video—Craig Richardson (2011, p. 73) has described the years c.1973–1976 as the SAC’s ‘most innovatory and expansionist period’—it had failed to cultivate a self-organising network of video art practitioners in Scotland with any resemblance to metropolitan centres like London. It should be noted, for instance, that bar Krikorian herself none of the artists exhibited at *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* were resident in Scotland. Whilst community video had found support within multidisciplinary programmes aimed at social improvement, video art as an increasingly segregated practice endured a more stilted development, ostensibly grinding to a halt by the end of the decade before a revival at the hands of a new generation years later.

A correlation can be drawn between the SAC’s staggered withdrawal from curatorial activities and the dwindling of video art projects in Scotland. Richardson (2011, p. 74) adds

that by the late 1970s, the self-determined exhibition programme of galleries like the New 57 Gallery, ‘would garner greater critical success and local participation than that centrally organised and administered by an SAC with its own competing curatorial and critical ambitions.’ With the novelty of the technology fading, however, neither the New 57 Gallery nor the post-McGrath TEC, proved the same commitment to video practice. In 1980, the SAC terminated its public programme at Charlotte Square, leaving the Fruit Market as their sole exhibition space (Scottish Arts Council, 1980). By 1984, a merger was orchestrated between the SAC and the New 57 Gallery resulting in the formation of an autonomous Fruitmarket Gallery, and marking the end of the SAC’s curatorial function (Brown, Jackson and Mulholland, 2018, p. 157). In this period of declining ambition, the SAC’s last significant curatorial engagement with video came, aptly, in the guise of two solo shows accorded to Krikorian whose service to the development of the form in Scotland had been singular.

2.4.3 *An Ephemeral Art* (1979) and *Eye to Eye* (1979)

An Ephemeral Art at the Third Eye Centre (19–28 April 1979) and *Eye to Eye* at the Fruit Market Gallery (20 October – 17 November 1979) were Krikorian’s first and second solo exhibitions respectively. Following her work on *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic*, Krikorian became a founding member of London Video Arts (Tooby, 2009). Thereafter, she developed an increasing level of international recognition as an artist alongside her curatorial work, exhibiting in group shows at galleries including the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (1977); Acme Gallery, London (1979); and The Kitchen, New York (1979). In 1977 she was a recipient of the SAC’s Awards to Artists Bursary (Video Art 78 Committee, 1978, p. 27), underwriting the development and production of works shown in 1979.



Figure 20: Krikorian, T. (1979) *An Ephemeral Art*, Third Eye Centre, April. [½ inch EIAJ videotape, black and white] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

Documentation of *An Ephemeral Art* is sparse, consisting primarily of a low-fidelity videotape, a brief statement and short essay published in the subsequent *Eye to Eye* exhibition catalogue, recorded and written by Krikorian herself, housed by the REWIND archive. Following McGrath's departure from the TEC in 1977, records of the organisation's activities suffer a marked depletion, with mention of *An Ephemeral Art* virtually absent. The exhibition comprised an eponymous installation of seven wall-mounted television monitors placed two feet apart. These alternated between four sets broadcasting live from each of the terrestrial channels—including the as yet non-existent fourth channel—and three which had been gutted of their CRT components, transformed into backlit tanks to house live butterfly pupae (Krikorian, 1979b). The broadcasting sets had had their contrast and audio turned down, purposefully muddying their images, whilst a self-portrait screen-printed onto clear PVC was overlaid upon these screens, intercepting the relationship between viewer and broadcast (Krikorian, 1979a). Over the ten-day run of the exhibition, the butterflies emerged—*large white*, *orange tip* and *map* varieties—filling the other three sets (Krikorian, 1979a). In a subsequent interview, Krikorian (quoted in Hatfield, 2005b, p. 16) reflected that 'you couldn't actually see [the butterflies] from a distance. You'd have to go and have a look,' suggesting that they also demanded a more engaged form of viewing.

The installation sought to juxtapose these life cycles with the indiscriminate flow of broadcast media. Therein, it underscored the difference between reality and its mediation, between real time and the compression of time as effected by television. In the accompanying essay, Krikorian (1979c, p.2) writes, 'it is important to be aware that the "real world" which television portrays is an edited highly illusory representation of it.' Situating the work within a critical tradition, she also states, 'my only interest in video, and indeed in television, stems from a formalist position, a formal analysis/decoding/deconstruction of the medium' (1979c, p.3). Despite invoking formalist critique with its growing reputation for visual asceticism, Krikorian's work is not austere, rather it enjoys an aesthetic dialogue with art history. Through the butterflies, as representations of transformation and fragility, Krikorian links the work to the historical genre of *vanitas*—seventeenth century Dutch still-life paintings depicting *memento mori* symbols that allegorise mortality, transience and the vanity of pleasure—which had been the thematic preoccupation of her video practice since 1977 (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1985).



Figure 21: Documentation of Krikorian, T. (1979) *Tableau*. [Photograph] In Krikorian, T. (1979) *Eye to Eye: Two installations by Tamara Krikorian*. Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council. Held at: Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive.

The two video installations which comprised her subsequent exhibition, *Eye to Eye*, would further develop upon this theme through a more direct invocation of the still life. In *Tableau* (1979), a table is placed in front of a large mirror and laid out with personal ephemera from the artist's studio including photographs, contact sheets, tapes, film catalogues, private view invitations, art magazines, an unlit candle, fruit, a vase of flowers and two television monitors amongst other things (Marshall, 1980, p. 164). One monitor, turned towards the viewer, displays live broadcast in colour; the other, turned towards the mirror, shows a faded image of the artist, motionless over a one-hour take in black and white (Krikorian, 1979d). Just as *An Ephemeral Art* had juxtaposed real time and video's distortion of time through the life cycle of butterflies, the flowers wilted and the fruit rotted whilst Krikorian's video self-portrait defied the same entropy. Objects could be rearranged by the viewer, themselves drawn into the work's composition by the mirror. In this way, the viewer is intended to identify their unique experience of the objects and space with the real world, alerted to its distinction from the fiction of video space.

The second installation, *Vanitas or an Illusion of Reality* (1979) developed upon a single-screen tape, *Vanitas* (1977) which Krikorian identified decades later as her most significant work (Hatfield, 2005b, p. 1).³⁸ Two monitors raised on a plinth are positioned back-to-back, one faces the viewer and the other faces the wall, on which a mirror of identical dimensions

³⁸ The presentation at the Fruit Market Gallery was also the second iteration of the installation version, first shown as part of *Video Art 78* (Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, 6–21 May 1978).

is fitted, reflecting the screen back. Both screens comprise a single shot of one-hour duration: the former features a motionless still life which turns to sepia, interrupted periodically by floating butterflies and bubbles; the reflected screen displays the artist, also motionless, holding a hand mirror in which a stream of popular newsreaders are visible, the careful posing of which alludes to the historic *tableau vivant* (Krikorian, 1979e). The back-to-back orientation, Krikorian (1979e) notes, plays on the custom within Dutch Vanitas painting of portraiture on the recto and still life on the verso of the same canvas. The description of an earlier version explains, ‘the choice of reference to Dutch 17th century still life painting lies in the meticulous care with which the painters attempted to reproduce reality’ (Video Art 78 Committee, 1978, p. 27). In a similar way, both monitors render a scene almost photographically, though this static reproduction is belied by two elements: the fragile, *memento mori* symbols of butterfly and bubble; and the endless cycle of news broadcasting. As the title suggests, Krikorian’s inclusion of these little ruptures is designed to reveal the mediated illusion of reality.

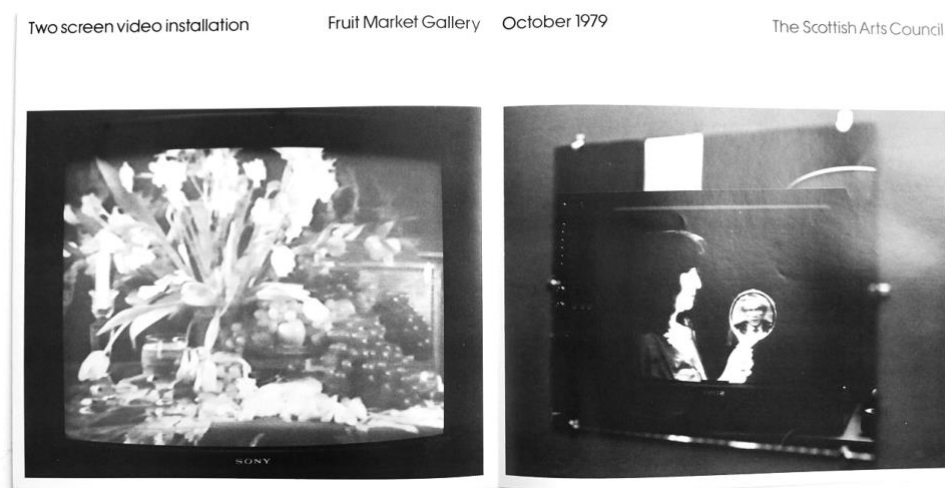


Figure 22: Documentation of Krikorian, T. (1979) *Vanitas or an Illusion of Reality*. [Photographs] In Krikorian, T. (1979) *Eye to Eye: Two installations by Tamara Krikorian*. Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council. Held at: Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive.

Where *An Ephemeral Art* has seemingly escaped press attention, *Eye to Eye* was reviewed by curator Richard Calvocoressi for *Art Monthly* and Stuart Marshall, who had assisted on the first *Vanitas* tape, for *FUSE* (Hatfield, 2005b, p. 28). Against the backdrop of creeping repetitiousness, stretching durations and slipping quality, Calvocoressi’s article situates Krikorian’s work within a moment of crisis in video practice more broadly.³⁹ ‘The video

³⁹ In the American context, Rosalind Krauss (1976) had by then theorised that ‘the medium of video is narcissism.’

artist's concern with real time,' he writes, 'is an extension of his or her almost obsessional interest in the medium itself and what it can and cannot do.'

Real life, except in rare moments of intensity when it may be said to approach the level of art, is on the whole formless and uninteresting, and without a shaping, dramatizing presence will remain so to the majority of observers. (Calvocoressi, 1979, p. 22)

That is, the very theatre which formalism sought to expose had also lent moving image work its vibrancy, leaving a monotonous practice that sacrificed pleasure at the expense of theoretical purity. 'Fully aware of the introspective tendencies of much contemporary video work,' however, Krikorian, Calvocoressi (1979, p. 22) argues, contributes to 'a long pictorial tradition of reflections on the transitory nature of mortal existence,' moving beyond video's chronic inwardness, to expand 'these preoccupations into necessary critique.'

In his review, Marshall (1980, p. 164) also decries the 'history of narcissistic video works.' By the late 1970s, he had begun to advocate for a more *postmodernist* video practice, that was, as Chris Meigh-Andrews (2006, p. 62) identifies, 'primarily concerned with the deconstruction of narrativity as the dominant social discourse in television.' Reflecting on video's first decade, Marshall (1996, p. 67) articulated an understanding of early work as having been too aligned to the project of modernism, 'in that the technology of video was their major preoccupation rather than the world in front of the lens which the medium was developed to reproduce.' Krikorian's exhibition, as he saw it, broke with this regressive practice: 'what stops these works "fitting" into the narcissistic video genre is their use of didactic reference and excessive content [...] the problem here is not one of mode of attention but is rather a play with perception' (Marshall, 1980, pp. 165, 167). In this way, both critics identify Krikorian's abundant symbolism as the quality which enables her to evade the mounting criticism of video art's self-absorption, refocused instead upon the Western ideology of looking.

Despite her concern for the hegemonic gaze—by then widely adopted within the feminist reappraisal of art history—Krikorian remained allegiant to the formalist cause and its predominantly male cohort. Whilst a feminist reading of her work is certainly possible, Krikorian (quoted in Hatfield, 2005b, p. 28) has reflected that 'I am from a slightly older generation than the artists who got very involved with feminism.' Though she had been keenly aware of her underrepresentation, the work had always been more concerned with 'media, politics and anti-capitalism' (2005b, p. 28). Following *Tableau* and the three versions

of *Vanitas*, a fifth work on the same theme, *The Heart of the Illusion* (1981) completed the *Vanitas* set and in that year she left Scotland permanently for Wales (Hatfield, 2005b, p. 35).

Krikorian's two exhibitions mark a number of intersected conclusions, reflecting social and systemic changes in Scotland and wider afield. Firstly, following the departure of Krikorian and McGrath amongst others, the SAC's withdrawal from curatorial activity left video in particular deprioritised. Upon its eventual revival at the hands of artist-run initiatives in the mid-1980s, video would no longer find itself segregated, becoming instead concomitant with film and performance practices. In the intervening period, the founding of both the Scottish Film Production Fund and Channel 4 in 1982 would affect a shift in exhibitionary platform for a select few. At the same time the primacy of pure formalism within both film and video practice, as Michael O'Pray (2003, sec. preface) for one has noted, became untenable amidst increased politicisation regarding issues of representation—not incidentally against the backdrop of Margaret Thatcher's 1979 election.

2.5 Film infrastructure and the artists' film

This chapter has so far concentrated on the entry of moving image media into the field of visual arts. As I have argued that artists' moving image is an interstitial practice, it is necessary therefore to examine the inverse narrative of artists' admission into the realm of film. This does not, however, presuppose an equivalence, of comparable investment between art and film infrastructures. Indeed, a significant imbalance, most pronounced at the level of public production funding, characterises the 1970s Scottish context. It is useful here to examine the country's cultural policy, particularly as it diverges from the British-English context. By 1972, the Arts Council of Great Britain's Artists' Film and Video Sub-Committee had been established to award funding for the increasing use of film and video within artistic practice, with no jurisdiction over Scotland. The devolved Scottish Arts Council, meanwhile, would not establish its own Film and Video Committee until 1979 (Scottish Arts Council Film and Video Committee, 1979). In this intervening period, I argue, discrepancies were fostered in the ways that artists could procure funding, shaping conditions of production that instructed unique modes of working, distributing and exhibiting.

Throughout the 1970s, economic support for artists' use of video and film media in Scotland remained relatively distinct, largely owing to their separate display contexts: video belonging to the monitor and gallery, film to the projector and cinema. By virtue of its curatorial work, the SAC had funded artists' experiments in video since *Locations Edinburgh*, though without a concerted scheme this was intermittent and never publicly accessible. Film meanwhile, was in theory supported via a policy 'to commission, or help subsidise the making of, films about artists or the arts, or films by artists' (Dunbar, 1973a) beginning with *Three Scottish Painters: Maxwell, Eardley and Philipson* (Laurence Henson, 1963). In practice, however, this promising policy was interpreted exclusively for the former purpose, producing a handful of documentaries about the plastic arts, architecture and literature. The potential of artists themselves filmmaking with SAC support was never realised. By 1979, the clause was removed from certain official documentation, which clarified:

Under the terms of its charter the SAC promotes all forms of art except film (this being the responsibility of the SFC). It does however have a remit to produce films about or connected with other arts such as painting, literature etc. (Scottish Film Council / Scottish Arts Council Working Party, 1979, p. 2)

Rather than suppressing artists' interventions, however, this dictum precipitated innovative negotiations of the system, producing a fascinating and irregular body of *ekphrastic* work.

These commissions ranged from profiles of Ian Hamilton Finlay (1969) and Hugh MacDiarmid (Oscar Marzaroli, *No Fellow Travellers*, 1972) to more inventive films like Murray Grigor's *Space and Light* (1972). Ostensibly a record of the brutalist site of St. Peter's Seminary, designed by Gillespie, Kidd & Coia, Grigor's 16mm film occupies a position between document and experiment through moments of quiet abstraction and baroque sound design. *Space and Light* received £3,000 from the SAC's Art Department and a further £500 from the Music Department for the commissioned score by Frank Spedding (Dunbar, 1973b). Grigor's is perhaps the best early example of a film subverting the SAC's terms of reference in the pursuit of autonomous artistic expression.

The same tactic of subterfuge would later be adopted by others including Glasgow-based animator Lesley Keen whose resolutely experimental work *Taking a Line for a Walk* (1983) was funded as an homage to artist Paul Klee. Keen (2020) remembers that,

The [SAC] didn't recognise film as an artform at that point, let alone animation. The only way you could get a grant was if you made a film about another artist. I had a Paul Klee interest going back to my primary school days so I thought, right, *Taking a Line for a Walk* because Paul Klee has all these very advanced theories about movement, so that'll be a good starting point.

In co-operation with the Scottish Central Film Library, the SAC also acted as an informal distributor of these films and others. William Buchanan (1973b) described its position in this partnership: 'the SAC helps to purchase copies of art films, and also promotes and subsidises showings of art films throughout Scotland.' By 1975, this collecting scope had expanded to comprise 'films on art, films by artists and experimental films' (Scottish Arts Council, 1975), which, as well as being available for subsidised hire, were displayed alongside recent acquisitions of painting and sculpture and recent videotapes recorded using SAC equipment at the Charlotte Square gallery (1–18 April 1975). In the SAC's 1974/1975 distribution catalogue, hires were individually priced—though they note that 'an evening's programme of films may be borrowed for a fee of £4.50' (Scottish Arts Council, c.1974b). The selection of titles largely comprised educational documentaries produced by the BBC or BFI, organised by subject, though a small number of miscategorised titles approached filmmaking as an art in itself. Under 'Sculpture Plastic Arts,' for instance, Eduardo Paolozzi's *History of Nothing* (1963) was available for £1.14—described as being 'suitable for art schools and those with some knowledge of Paolozzi's work' (c.1974b, p. 7). This disclaimer preaches some caution amongst non-inducted viewers, though doesn't effectively convey the unflinching

experimentalism of the work. The ‘Drawing Decoration Design’ selection, meanwhile, included animation by Norman McLaren (*Fiddle-de-dee*, 1947; *La Poulette Grise*, 1947; *Hoppity Pop*, 1949; *Blinkity Blank*, 1954; and *Short and Suite*, 1959) amongst features on printmaking, ancient crafts and pencil techniques (c.1974b, p. 23).



Figure 23: Keen, L. (1983) *Taking a Line for a Walk*. [35mm film, colour] Courtesy of the artist.

Though the SAC policy of commissioning *films about art* had opened the doors to a handful of experimental works and it had almost unknowingly placed others into distribution, this represented a fraction of what was by then available to artists in England. The ACGB Film and Video Sub-Committee funding scheme had worked since 1972 to ‘give grants to artists to make films as an extension and development of what they have done in traditional media, painting, sculpture,’ these were variable but usually to the value of around £1,000 (McGrath, 1973). Thereafter, films were included in an Art Film Tour and placed in the BFI’s catalogue for hire, ACGB would recuperate costs from 75% of profits on each film hire, after which these would go back to the artists (McGrath, 1973). Ensuring ongoing access for exhibitors, this approach to distribution represented a far more sympathetic advance on the educational aims of the SAC’s Films on Art catalogue.

As early as 1973, the SAC had tabled the formation of its own Film Committee modelled on its ACGB counterpart whose duties would be,

- (i) to advise the Council on policy and plans to achieve its objects in film ? [sic] video and related media;
- (ii) to recommend to the Council the allocation and authorisation of funds to commission films and to grant-aid the making of films;
- (iii) to initiate and undertake any relevant enquiries and to co-ordinate the SAC’s work in film generally. (Dunbar, 1973c)

The development of any such committee was however beleaguered by the complexity of its potential relationship to Scotland's existing film bodies, primarily the Scottish Film Council, the Films of Scotland Committee and the BFI Production Fund. The SFC was then primarily concerned 'with the promotion of film culture in Scotland' (Scottish Film Council / Scottish Arts Council Working Party, 1979, p. 2), including film education and non-commercial exhibition, but did not allocate funds directly to film production. The FSC was a sub-committee of the Scottish Council for Development and Industry, which 'receives no public funds but acts as an enabling body on a consultancy basis, discussing possible films with sponsors and over-seeing the production of them' (1979, p. 2). Although Scotland-based filmmakers in this period were not technically excluded from the ostensibly UK-wide remit of BFI production funding, the SAC recognised in 1979 that 'Scottish film-makers have had great difficulty in gaining access, [...] because of the severe competition from film-makers who are permanently resident in London, and who thus more easily win recognition from the BFI' (Scottish Film Council, 1979). Another report added that 'films by Scotland film makers are seldom made with its finance' (Royle and Wraight, 1978) and a third supposed that, despite their filmmaking talent, 'Scots are either unaware of the existence of the BFI's services or else they consider that organisation to be too remote (both literally and metaphorically)' (*Scottish Film Council Production Fund: The Argument*, c.1978, p. 1).

Amongst these bodies, then, the financing of filmmaking as a creative practice was largely obfuscated, nor did the long-awaited establishment of the SAC Film Committee in 1979 herald any immediate reform. Rather, this group was ceded the authority to enact existing SAC film policy and were tasked with forming a new working party with the SFC (Scottish Arts Council Film and Video Committee, 1979, p. 2). In their research, the SAC/SFC coalition found that Scotland's 'professional film production community' consisted of only sixty to seventy individuals, noting that,

The type of film which they would like to make can be described as the entertainment/art sector; this would include full length fiction films, short fiction films, documentaries (about aspects of Scottish life and culture which reflect the film-makers' own views rather than satisfy the purposes of a sponsor) as well as—to a more limited extent—categories such as animation and experimental film-making. (Scottish Film Council / Scottish Arts Council Working Party, 1979, p. 1)

This coalition became the Scottish Film Production Committee (SFPC), which in turn investigated the formation of a new policy and fund.⁴⁰ Proposals included an assumption of the BFI's existing production funds, comprising £400,000 in 1978/1979—modest in comparison to the £2.2m then awarded to visual arts in the UK (Scottish Film Council, 1979). SFC Chairman Ian Lockerbie (1979) suggested a Goschen slice of this fund but was met with resistance from the newly established Association of Independent Producers Scotland (AIPS). Not wanting to preclude Scottish filmmakers from BFI support, the SFPC subsequently resolved that this 'would be unwise' ('Minutes of a meeting,' 1979). Three years later, the Scottish Film Production Fund (1982–1997) was finally established as an autonomous body—its first-year income comprising grants of £50,000 from the SAC and £30,000 from the SFC / Scottish Education Department (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1983a)—representing the first available public subsidy for film production with neither the compromises of ordained subject matter, as under SAC policy, or of industrial sponsorship, as brokered by the FSC.

2.5.1 The Glasgow Film Theatre, 1975–1976

Whilst funding for film production, experimental or otherwise, developed unevenly in Scotland, progress in the area of exhibition was more proactive. In the same years that promoters like Alistair Mackintosh, Lesley Greene, Tom McGrath and Tamara Krikorian had carved a space for video in (and outside) the gallery, a number of others were bringing artists into the realm of film-theatrical display at the Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT) and Edinburgh International Film Festival.

Following a downturn in admissions, Glasgow's Cosmo cinema was sold to the SFC and reopened as the GFT in May 1974. Extending the SFC's remit to further encompass the financing of exhibitors, the GFT became the first Regional Film Theatre in its portfolio, followed by Edinburgh's Filmhouse in 1978 (National Library of Scotland, n.d.-a). Under its educational mission, the SFC launched an accompanying quarterly, *The Glasgow Film Theatre Review*, to advertise programming and publish discursive essays, bulletins and quizzes. These publications record intermittent engagements with the avant-garde, beginning in February 1975 with a season of experimental filmmaking. Over two programmes, *Underground USA* (19 February 1975) and *Underground GB: Films of Steve Dwoskin* (12

⁴⁰ Known elsewhere as the Joint Film Funding Committee (Scottish Film Council / Scottish Arts Council Working Party, 1979, p. 2).

March 1975), this season sought to condense a vast history into a knowingly undersized slot, 'for reasons dictated by available funds and specialised techniques' (Scottish Film Council, 1975, p. 27). Its written introduction struggles with articulating a category for this work, dubbing it *underground* with the proviso that such a term is 'an inadequate expression' (1975, p. 25). There follows an overview of the avant-garde, from European Surrealism to the New American Cinema, captured in one crowded paragraph. Proclaiming 'it is the American Underground which strongest [*sic*] stimulus for film avant-garde throughout the world' (1975, p. 27), the programme offers an uncontested deference to the US context, compounded by its representation of British work via American expatriate Stephen Dwoskin alone. In these ways, the programme provided a fairly unsophisticated introduction to an unfamiliar practice, unconcerned with its implications for local production.

The following year, however, a six-phase season, *Avant-Garde Cinema: Film and the Plastic Arts*, would offer a more comprehensive examination of the practice, linking the GFT to activity at EIFF 1976 and a complementary exhibition of photographs and stills by artist-filmmakers Marcel Duchamp, Hans Richter, Man Ray and Andy Warhol in the foyer of the Third Eye Centre (Scottish Film Council, 1976). Like its predecessor, the season wrestles with categorisation. Its introductory notes open: 'if it were definable the Avant-Garde would cease to exist' (1976, p. 18). 'Loosely governed by notions of chronology' (1976, p. 19), its six programmes included *Dada & Surrealism*; *Early US Avant-Garde*; *Pop Art*; two programmes of *Recent Avant-Garde*; and *Expanded Cinema*, each supplemented by lectures and discussions. Though the response, if any, to this season is unknown, the schedule alone demonstrates a deepening degree of cineliteracy, moving beyond the avant-garde canon to form propositions on possible revisions and additions, including, for instance, William Klein's pop satire, *Mr Freedom* (1968) and *The Life and Death of 9413: a Hollywood Extra* (1928) by Slavko Vorkapich and Robert Florey—'virtually unknown as an avant-garde filmmaker, remembered only as a prolific "B" movie director' (1976, p. 19). For the final programme, *Expanded Cinema*, the GFT collaborated with the TEC on presenting Malcolm Le Grice's four-screen projection work, *After Manet* (1975). An off-site project, this event necessitated a commitment to experimental practices beyond the confines of the cinema space. Despite the significant undertaking of this season, however, nowhere did it attempt to consider experimental production in Scotland and, despite its interest in probing the *avant-garde*, was unconcerned with undoing its constitution of white, male and metropolitan voices.

AVANT GARDE CINEMA

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PHASE ONE

PHASE THREE

DADA & SURREALISM — *Un Chien Andalou* (1928) Bunuel smokes a cigarette, holds open a girl's eye and after a cloud has crossed the moon, slices open the eye with a razor. A violent affront in the opening moments of the film. Later, Dalí's images proliferate — putrefying donkeys dragged across a room by clerics, insects multiply in the hand of a man. Sexual impulses realised from the subconscious. An anti-Avant-Garde tract in which "Nothing Symbolises Anything" — hailed as a masterpiece by the Avant-Garde. *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929) — Dziga Vertov, documentarist/propagandist (*Kino Pravda*, *Kino Eye*) experiments in montage. Versatility of the camera — hand-held and trick devices to create a reality beyond that perceptible by the human eye. *Life and Death of 9413 — A Hollywood Extra* (1929) — Satire on Hollywood alternating fierce close-ups and model sets designed by Surrealist Slavko Vorkapich, photographed by Gregg Toland, directed by Robert Florey (virtually unknown as an avant-garde film-maker, remembered only as a prolific 'B' movie director)

PHASE TWO

EARLY US AVANT-GARDE — Maya Deren: *Meshes of The Afternoon* (1943) — surrealist nightmare film, exploring psychological abnormality in a young girl; a curve in the road, a key, a knife on a table — protagonists in the suicide. From Freud to Fetishism. *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1946) — dance drama exploring ritualistic expression through two media. The Underground becomes an Establishment. *Dreams That Money Can Buy* (1944-46) — expatriated European Avant-Garde from a collection of painters: Calder, Duchamp, Ernst, Leger & Man Ray with Hans Richter directing — feature length colour movie — strangely archaic.

POP ART — *Mr. Freedom* (1968) ideological conflict as costumed comic-strip by former fashion photographer William Kein. A Satire on 'freedom' made in Paris during '68 compared by French critics to Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, Pop Art in the service of revolution. *Richard Hamilton* (Arts Council film on the painter) *Marilyn Five Times* (Bruce Conner — image study).

PHASE FOUR & PHASE FIVE

RECENT AVANT-GARDE — *Wavelength & Standard Time* by Mike Snow. *The Fluxus Anthology* and plenty more. Films from the London Film-makers' Co-op including work by Bill Brand and Hollis Frampton

PHASE SIX

EXPANDED CINEMA — *After Manet* by Malcolm LeGrice in Third Eye Centre. A detailed brochure on this event is to be issued at the beginning of May giving articles, times and playdates.

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Figure 24: Scottish Film Council (1976) 'Avant-Garde Cinema: Film and the Plastic Arts,' *The Glasgow Film Theatre Review*, (9), pp. 18–19. Held at: Glasgow: National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive. MI. 1/8/18.

Though the GFT's programme hadn't proven an advocate for local practices, in quite another way, *The Glasgow Film Theatre Review* did. The quarterly offered a space for criticism and means of circulation—though the extent of its reach is unknown. Publishing commentaries on the situation facing filmmaking in Scotland, the *Review* pointed to a growing discord that anticipated, amongst other things, the formation of the Association of Independent Producers Scotland (AIPS). In one perceptive essay, 'Film-Making in Scotland,' for instance, John Adams (1975, p. 28) offered a call to action: 'if Scotland is ever to have a film industry of its own, the time is ripe, many film-makers say, for concerted action now.' He applauds the work of Lesley Keen, Margaret Tait, and Mike Alexander, decrying not the talent but the paucity of funding and infrastructure (1975, p. 28). Adams usefully articulates a condition whereby filmmakers in Scotland sit precariously between the categories of professional and non-professional, distinguished, in his view, only by whether a living can be drawn from practice (1975, p. 28). He understands that 'overlapping the professional/non-professional categories is the notion of independent film-making—those whose work is purposeful and personal, experimental or avant-garde, political or social in intent, and includes video as well

as film' (1975, p. 28). Without a dominant industry to delineate between the ranks of professional and amateur, a homogenous economic state arises in which practitioners are linked in their mutual *independence*.

Therein, Adams establishes a key distinction between moving image in Scotland and in centres like London. Where an avant-garde there might have formed as politically and aesthetically oppositional to an identified mainstream, in Scotland diverse independent filmmakers found themselves cohabiting in ill-defined groups. As Robin MacPherson (1990, p. 210) has noted, 'Scotland had, in a sense, no mainstream industry to spawn an "alternative."' In this way, filmmaking networks in Scotland were first constituted around professional solidarity rather than by a consensus of political or aesthetic agenda.

MacPherson (1990, p. 209) adds,

Scotland's filmmaking community, smaller and more homogenous, was, by the mid-seventies, still struggling to find any kind of consistent expression, far less to explore the creative and organisational frontiers that were being explored by the avant-garde, Arts Labs, film co-ops, Free Cinema, structuralists and so on.

This underdevelopment resulted in a long intermingling of avant-garde expression with more conventional, narrative-led forms.⁴¹ Due in part to a lack of tailored commissioning and exhibition opportunities, this co-habitation has, I argue, effected an undue sense of uniformity with consequences in the under-identification of artists' filmmaking as a discrete mode. This oversight, I suggest, is exacerbated further by the application of categories and definitions thereof theorised within an entirely different socio-economic context.

2.5.2 *Film Bang* (1976) and *Cinema and the Small Country* (1977)

Adams' views on the inadequacy of infrastructure was widely shared and provided the impetus for two influential events, *Film Bang* (January 1976) at the GFT and *Cinema and the Small Country* (9 December 1977) at Calton Studios, Edinburgh. A 2014 review of the country's film sector credits these events as the first and second points in a timeline of Scottish film policy (BOP Consulting, 2014, p. 62). The former brought together disparate film personnel and precipitated an annual directory of the same name which continues online today. MacPherson (1990, p. 211) notes the objectives of *Film Bang*, 'to raise the profile of Scottish film-makers and address the terms of their dependency on such a limited range of

⁴¹ As in the case of events like *Glasgow Film Makers* (Scottish Arts Council's Glasgow Centre, 1973) or in the Scope Film Competition.

finance.’ By the measure of press attention, it certainly created momentum. Describing the event as ‘a step towards rectifying an untenable situation,’ Cordelia Oliver (1976b, p. 8) relayed its findings:

ON THE FACE of it, the statistics are appalling. Ninety per cent of Government-sponsored films, *concerning Scotland* (some 188 in five years) have been commissioned by London companies; and this in spite of the fact that, as is proved by awards won at festivals all over the globe, the quality [...] of the best Scottish made films compares, like for like, with good films anywhere.

Beyond mere acknowledgement of this crisis in representation, however, Oliver (1976b, p. 8) noted a prevailing ‘mood of solidarity’ which promised a changing tide. The following year, *Cinema and the Small Country* organised by the SAC in conjunction with the AIPS would raise questions around the particular character of a possible national cinema. A one-day conference, the programme consisted of papers on distribution, broadcast and filmmaking in the European Common Market, alongside case studies drawn from comparable contexts including the Netherlands, Quebec and England (Scottish Arts Council, 1977b).

At their Charlotte Square premises, the SAC coordinated an accompanying two-week film programme (26 November – 11 December 1977), showcasing *British Avant-Garde Film* in the first week and *Independent Scottish Film Makers* over the second. Testifying to Adams’ view of the differing, even incomparable conditions of production between Scotland and Britain, this scheduling in itself suggests an ontological distinction. The British section comprised a selection drawn from *Perspectives on British Avant-Garde Film* (Hayward Gallery, 2 March – 24 April 1977), curated by David Curtis and Deke Dusinberre. This featured a range of film work by London-based artists including Ian Breakwell, David Hall, Bruce Lacey, Malcolm Le Grice, Annabel Nicolson, William Raban and Tony Sinden.⁴² An introductory note explains that these works had largely been funded by the ACPGB Artists’ Film Committee, adding that ‘most film-makers currently working in this area have been or are currently in receipt of financial support from the committee’ (Scottish Arts Council, 1977a). In this way, the eponymous avant-garde form in Britain was inextricably linked to this funding pipeline, which residents of Scotland were, by definition, unable to access.

Independent Scottish Film Makers, by contrast, was selected by the AIPS and featured works that were all independently produced. Through this selection, they hoped to illustrate ‘that

⁴² All previously involved in *Open Circuit* and/or *Open Cinema*.

there is the desire and the skill to go beyond the traditional Scottish propaganda film—that Scottish film makers are prepared to back their own productions—develop the ideas—find the finance—seek out the distribution’ (Scottish Arts Council, 1977c). With less concern for the relationship between discrete works, the screenings demonstrated a unique, if discordant, attempt at representing film practice on a national scale. In doing so, it might represent the first such showcase in Scotland, advancing upon earlier efforts in regional consolidation like *Glasgow Film Makers* (1973). The work ranged from narrative drama to social documentary inspired by the European political avant-garde to formal experiments which evoked the co-op movement.

Better known for his work in photography, for instance, Oscar Marzaroli screened two films *Dear Green Place* (c.1968) and *Le Grand Magic Circus: Once Upon a Time* (1973). Produced by Ogam Films, an enterprise co-founded by Marzaroli and Martin Singleton, these two works demonstrate strong links to the French New Wave. Like Chris Marker’s *La Jetée* (1962), *Dear Green Place* is comprised from a montage of stills, with a voiceover written by Alasdair Gray. Through photographs made over a ten-year period, the film documents the eponymous city of Glasgow as it endures a vast programme of regeneration, recording tenements in the Gorbals, children at play, then the demolition and construction which spawns a new urban environment (Marzaroli and Pavett, 1968). *Once Upon a Time*, meanwhile, follows theatre director Jérôme Savary’s radical Le Grand Magic Circus as they recruit, rehearse and perform a Marxist retelling of the classic ‘bourgeois’ fairy tale, Cinderella. Erotic, hysterical and gender-bending, the *Commedia dell’arte* troupe invokes the circus as a means of opposition to the literary elitism of conventional theatre, following the mantra that ‘the quality of theatre should be, first of all, life, and not words’ (Brown et al., 1973). In homage to Jean-Luc Godard, Savary (quoted in Brown *et al.*, 1973) declares ‘what is important is not to make political theatre, but do theatre politically.’ In Marzaroli’s documentary, form then follows its subject wherein chaotic and drawn-out observational sequences establish a directness that also challenges the literary structure of filmmaking. The selection of these two films for the programme of *Independent Scottish Film Makers* is significant in that of the over seventy works produced by Ogam Films, the vast majority were documentaries sponsored by cultural, civic or industrial clients including the Glasgow Corporation and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. *Dear Green Place* and *Once Upon a Time* therefore exist as exceptions to the rule, offering something of a provocation as to what more might be possible outside of the realm of sponsorship.

INDEPENDENT SCOTTISH FILM MAKERS	
Sunday 4 December - Sunday 11 December	Scottish Arts Council Gallery 19 Charlotte Square Edinburgh
Monday 4 December (12.30 and 7.30)	Admission Free THE PINE TREE, Eddie McConnell IPA (Scotland) Limited Directed and photographed by Eddie McConnell. This film adaptation of the Hans Christian Andersen story of the same name, is told in verse by the outstanding young Scottish poet Liz Lochner. A grass is greener paradox which the most fairy tales is more for adults. POLICEMAN FILMS Ltd Alexandra
Monday 5 December (12.30 and 7.30)	A 12 year old boy leaves his island home to go to secondary school on a neighbouring island. Mike Alexander's film tells of the boy's relationship with a supervising teacher and with the other boys who share his boarding house lodgings, against a confused family background. DEAR GREEN PLACE, Oscar Narzarioli Oscar Narzarioli An essay in still photography of Oscar Narzarioli. MIA, John Schuster The film was made in Glasgow at a time when demolition activity was at fever pitch. Around every corner masonry was crissing, huli dozers rumbling and fire burning. In the midst of this holocaust the citizens went about their business. The film was independently produced by John Schuster for the sum of 1500.
Monday 5 December (12.30 and 7.30)	THE CALDER MERRY A telephone dismantled portraits of William Sorely, the hulk-ridden Perth poet of the 30's. The 30 strong cast is headed by Bertie Scott, Harry Steamer, Gerry Stevin and Bill Peterson. THE FLEET MARKET, Gordon Ritchie Burns Yard, the renowned open-air junk yard in Prestonsmans owned by Sam Burns provided the idea and location for this film. ON THE MOUNTAIN, Margaret Tait There is a film within a film here. A film called ROSE STUART is enclosed intact with academy leader, censor certificate and credit and end titles, inside a picture of the street in Glasgow, to which the film is set. The film is a record of the street's reconstruction observation of the famous Edinburgh street.
Tuesday 6 December (12.30 and 7.30)	THE DOUGIEALS, Mike Alexander Film adaptation of a short story by Robert McLellan, produced for SMC. The story is one of a series written by McLellan for radio, recreating life on a Croft in the Highlands, Inverness, where he spent his boyhood years. Shows the first World War.
Tuesday 6 December continued (12.30 and 7.30)	OVER UPON A TIME, Oscar Narzarioli Oscar Films Limited Brecon Productions A study of the work of Jerome Savary and the outstanding Grand Magic Circus theatre group. This film explores the cause and effect of peoples' beliefs as these travelling players move between London, Paris and La Rochelle.
Wednesday 7 December (12.30 and 7.30)	MY CHILDHOOD, Bill Douglas A film synopsis of the 7:34 theatre company's LITTLE RED HEN. There are also included with the veteran communist, Harry McNamee, and Shirley's Memoirs. HUGH McINDRUM, Margaret Tait The first film of an autobiographical trilogy, it is set in a Scottish mining village in the 1950's. LITTLE RED HEN, Steven Clark-Hall A film synopsis of the 7:34 theatre company's LITTLE RED HEN. There are also included with the veteran communist, Harry McNamee, and Shirley's Memoirs. HUGH McINDRUM, Margaret Tait The poet's life at the time, most of the filming was done for this. Some of the forward material of him in his home in Inverness, is interspersed with an imaginative version of some of his poems, which he obligingly and graciously consented to suit what the film makers thought ought to be a better, more later recorded by him.
Thursday 8 December (12.30 and 7.30)	THE LONG SPRING, Mike Alexander - subtitled DIARY OF AN OLYMPIC ATHLETE The film follows the progress of one athlete - British international hammer thrower - the games in Montreal. THE CALENDARIAN ACCOUNT, Brian Crumlish Thomas Telford and his contemporary Sir Walter Scott argue the toss about romance versus progress in the Highlands. "...connections and essentially undermines the direct Scottish nationalism which constitutes the backbone of the film. Inevitably, New Edinburgh Review. THE FOREST, Bill Forsyth Bill Forsyth's film of Scottish forestry has been made for a general audience and gives its comment on the forestry industry in human terms. A beautiful, stately paced film set at a given time for the enjoyment of the forest as it moves from season to season. Guaranteed to make tree lovers of everyone.
Friday 9 December (12.30 and 7.30)	MY AIR FOLK - part 2 of Bill Douglas' autobiographical trilogy. MURRAY GRIFFIN, Murray Griffin A view of popular decorative art, past and present, in Malta presented by Eduardo Paoletti.
Saturday 10 December (12.30 and 7.30)	THE LEGION OF LOS TAVOS, Charles Gormley/Bill Forsyth Shot last summer in Ecuador this film examines proofs of previous civilisations in the biggest cave system in South America. Taking off from Frich van Daniken's best selling book, it leads to some striking conclusions about who we are, where we are from, and how we got to be on this planet. FLUTTERBY, Donald Holwell Imaginative presentation of the Soperman myth using animated collages of newspaper photographs. THE TREE, Mike Alexander Shot early about the contrasting reactions of a farmer and his adolescent son towards a young couple camping on their land.
Sunday 11 December (2.30 and 7.30)	STEELE UPON THE SKAND, Murray Griffin Explores the work of three sculptors - Gerald Laing, Gavin Scobie and Chris Grieve - in their exhibition in the grounds of Crish Castle in Kinross-shire in 1975. STILL LIFE WITH HONESTY, Bill Forsyth/Martin Singleton A documentary about the Scottish painter William Gillies. A POINT IN TIME, Steve Clark-Hall A documentary on William Johnston.

Figure 25: Scottish Arts Council (1977) *Independent Scottish Film Makers*. [Programme notes] Held at: Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Arts, The Glasgow Miracle: Materials for Alternative Histories Archive.

Where these works spoke to the political avant-garde tradition, the inclusion of Margaret Tait's *On the Mountain* (1974) and *Hugh MacDiarmid: A Portrait* (1964) asserted the possibility of another kind of avant-garde practice in Scotland. Tait, who had publicly decried the system of sponsorship promoted by the FSC, self-funded the vast majority of her films through her work as a General Practitioner (Tait, 1988; Neely, 2008). Enabling her to pursue an uncompromised vision, her work shared an artisanal, hand-made quality with the co-op movement and though she was 'outspokenly uncomfortable' (Neely, 2009) with the *avant-garde* descriptor, her experimental practice frequently took on the film form as the subject of deconstruction. *On the Mountain*, for instance, incorporates the entirety of an earlier work, *Rose Street* (1956), including the leader and titles. Revisiting the same neighbourhood around her Edinburgh studio, *On the Mountain* becomes about time, the city's regeneration and film as a witness thereof. The work records the dissonance between two sets of footage recorded decades apart; it demonstrates how new meaning can be drawn from documentary images by the context of their display. Ahead of a televised profile on the work of Tait (*Margaret Tait: Film Maker*, Channel 4, 25 April 1983), presenter Tamara Krikorian (1983, p. 17) revisited the film for *Undercut*, explaining, 'the original was shot in black and white, and the negative was lost, and for this reason Tait had the idea of preserving the film by framing it complete [sic] in colour in a 1974 contrasted look at the same street.' In revealing the off-screen circumstances around the film's production, Krikorian articulates another function of the work. While on the one hand it records the changing environment of Edinburgh in front of the camera, on the other it forms a metanarrative about the materiality of film, preservation and technological change. Tait and Marzaroli's quietly radical films were interspersed amongst conventional work, without signposting of their aesthetic or political difference.

Reflecting on *Film Bang* and *Cinema and the Small Country* together, MacPherson (2014, p. 38) notes that 'these semi campaigning conferences articulated aims such as the establishment of a Scottish film production fund but beyond a desire for more autonomous resources they avoided adopting a manifesto of film-making aesthetics or politics.' They did, however, wrangle with the shared socio-economic condition of *independence*, which, I argue, offers a more productive lens than film-theoretical categories like *avant-garde* through which to understand artists' filmmaking in Scotland at this time. It is an intriguing paradox, therefore, that in the very same period one of the UK's premier promoters of avant-garde enquiry had emerged in Scotland through the revitalisation of Edinburgh International Film Festival under a new cohort of young cinephiles.

2.6 The Edinburgh International Film Festival

Part of the programme of postwar cultural renewal, the Edinburgh International Film Festival (1947–) started life as the International Festival of Documentary Films. For several years, it operated as a platform influenced by co-founder John Grierson's principles but by the late 1960s had become what film historian Peter Stanfield (2008, p. 64) describes as, 'little more than a showcase for films chosen by government and industry agents, alongside films that had an often tenuous connection to Scotland, and British movies that carried the hallmark of respectability.' In 1968, Murray Grigor became the festival's director, inaugurating a shift from relative conservatism to a more progressive, programmer-led approach. Grigor soon recruited the cinephilic duo of Lynda Myles and David Will, who brought with them 'a knowledge of French film theory gleaned from the pages of *Cahiers du Cinema* and *Positif*' (Stanfield, 2008, p. 64). Media researcher Marijke de Valck (2007, p. 175) has described the post-1968 period as the 'age of programmers' in which the French New Wave produced a transformation whereby 'festivals appropriated the notions of auteur and new waves as strategic discourse [then] deployed this discourse to distinguish themselves as institutions of discovery.' This era, de Valck (2007, p. 173) argues, can also 'be seen as a reaction against the dominant influence of geopolitical agendas and glamour in the period prior to that.' From a mission of postwar cultural diplomacy to an *institution of discovery*, EIFF's decisive post-1968 shift was then an exemplar case in this international movement.

In his study of the prolific decade which followed, Matthew Lloyd (2011, p. 39) notes that EIFF's 1969 edition, profiling the work of Samuel Fuller, 'constituted one of the earliest negotiations of auteurism by a British film institution.' In 1970, Margaret Tait, who Grigor (1970) describes as 'Scotland's most independent film-maker,' was accorded a mid-career retrospective. Amongst twenty 16mm films then completed, the selection included *Hugh MacDiarmid: A Portrait* (1964), *Where I Am Is Here* (1964), and *Caora Mor: The Big Sheep* (1966), representing perhaps the first major reckoning with her practice (Grigor, 1970). The following year another of Scotland's film pioneers, Norman McLaren, received the same treatment (Hickey, 1982, p. 71). Revealing of historical oversight, former EIFF director Jim Hickey's timeline of Scottish film culture (1982) notes McLaren's retrospective but, as Sarah Neely (2013, p. 153) identifies, fails to acknowledge Tait's.

It wasn't until 1972, however, that the festival began to manifest its desire to advance, rather than reflect, film-critical discourse. In this edition, Myles worked with theorists Laura

Mulvey and Claire Johnston to stage the first European festival event devoted to female directors: *The Women's Film Festival* (Lloyd, 2011, p. 45). Its programme included screenings of historical and contemporary work, talks and a symposium, encouraging discussions around the politics of representation. Prefiguring Mulvey's landmark essay on feminist psychoanalysis, 'Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema,' written the following year, the event, Stanfield (2008, p. 68) writes, was 'an indicator of the shifting political terrain of film culture in the early 1970s.' Though met with limited press response, *The Women's Film Festival* prepared the ground for revised understandings of the festival as a film-cultural agent in itself. This position would characterise Myles' own tenure as festival director (1973–1980), in which a string of events would seek to progress avant-garde theory and practice, providing a meeting place for critics and filmmakers. EIFF programmer Kim Knowles (2020), whose research into this period yielded a public reappraisal in 2016, notes that through Mulvey, Johnston, and Peter Wollen 'the festival had quite a strong relationship with the *Screen* journal.' Myles regularly visited the London Film-Makers' Co-op too, forging connections with the network around which Structural/Materialism was forming. 'You can see that relationship in the programme,' Knowles (2020) adds.

The culmination of these influences was perhaps most felt in the 1976 edition. A notice placed in *Screen* announced that 'pursuing its policy of furthering rather than reflecting developments in film culture, the Edinburgh Film Festival 1976 is organising two special events in conjunction with its regular presentation of new films' (Brewster, 1976, p. 8): *Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (23–28 August 1976) and *The International Forum on Avant-Garde Film* (30 August – 3 September 1976). These new priorities were reflected by the annual publication, which dropped its established auteur-focus for the theory-laden issue *Edinburgh '76 Magazine: Psycho-Analysis / Cinema / Avant-Garde* (Stanfield, 2008, p. 70). Concerning the 'science of the construction of the individual' (Lloyd, 2011, p. 50), *Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* applied psychoanalytical methods to a programme of nine films ranging from industrial to avant-garde productions. Organised by Wollen and Simon Field, *The International Forum on Avant-Garde Film*, meanwhile, focused exclusively on avant-garde material.



Figure 26: Edinburgh International Film Festival (1976) *Edinburgh Magazine '76: Psycho-Analysis / Cinema / Avant-Garde*.
Edinburgh: Edinburgh International Film Festival, (1).

2.6.1 *The International Forum on Avant-Garde Film (1976)*

Building upon the 1975 publication of Wollen's essay 'The Two Avant-Gardes,' *The International Forum on Avant-Garde Film* aimed to bring 'these two groups together, to explore the points of similarity and difference between them' (Knowles, 2017, p. 299). Wollen's matrix arranged European political new waves on one side and the formal experimentation of the British-American co-op movement on the other, though the forum seemingly granted more space to the latter. The accompanying film programme comprised a week of matinee screenings at Edinburgh's Cameo film theatre, offering a broad overview ranging from Dziga Vertov's agit-prop documentary *Enthusiasm* (1930) to Stan Brakhage's cosmological epic *Dog Star Man* (1964) and works of Third Cinema like Santiago Álvarez' *79 Primavera*s (1969). In the same week, the Filmhouse hosted a series of evening-slot monographic screenings featuring new work by Stephen Dwoskin, Hollis Frampton, Peter Gidal, Birgit and Wilhelm Hein, George Landow, Jean Pierre Lefebvre, Malcolm Le Grice, Stewart Mackinnon, William Raban, Yvonne Rainer, Paul Sharits and Michael Snow. Two further expanded cinema events, featuring Anthony McCall, Le Grice and the Heins, were staged at the Scottish Arts Council's Charlotte Square gallery (31 August and 1 September 1976) (Edinburgh International Film Festival, 1976).

Just four weeks earlier, the gallery hosted its *Open Cinema* exhibition, with a programme that included two expanded cinema works by Le Grice (5 August 1976) amongst others. Whilst

the catalogue to that exhibition thanks Myles for her ‘contribution to the selection and planning of this event’ (Scottish Arts Council, 1976), it omits mention of the forthcoming forum. Oddly, the forum in turn reciprocates this omission, additionally neglecting acknowledgment of the GFT’s season *Avant-Garde Cinema: Film and the Plastic Arts* which also featured Le Grice a few months earlier, suggesting perhaps a lack of overview in these prolific months.

In the forum’s committedly international programme, Stewart Mackinnon’s contribution represented perhaps the only Scottish voice accorded representation through the screening of his debut feature *Justine* (1976). An adaptation of the Marquis de Sade’s 1791 novel of the same name, Mackinnon’s *Justine* was funded through the BFI Production Board. Mackinnon had already moved to London in pursuit of training in illustration, explaining that ‘Edinburgh wasn’t the Edinburgh that it is today, which is much more of an international city [...] London was glamorous and exciting’ (quoted in Poynor, 2011). Whilst at the Royal College of Art he developed skills in filmmaking and editing and upon finishing his MA established the Film Work Group with graduate peers. Following *Justine*, Mackinnon made two rejected applications to the ACGB Artists’ Film and Video Sub-Committee in 1977 for a documentary portrayal of ‘various aspects of Scottish culture,’ noting that he was ‘particularly fascinated by the great oral traditions in the Islands’ (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977, pp. 5, 6). Then comprising Stuart Hood, David Curtis, Mulvey and Field amongst others (1977, p. 1), the sub-committee decided that the application fell outwith its jurisdiction, as minutes record:

The Film Officer added that [...] it might cause difficulties if the Arts Council of Great Britain gave him some money rather than the Scottish Arts Council; however, Stewart explained that he had approached them and found that they did not fund documentaries so there would be no infringement. The Film Officer said that there would still be problems and the application would have to be routed through the SAC. (1977, pp. 5–6)

Here a structural incapability to deal with cross-border proposals in British cultural policy was exposed, to the ultimate paralysis of Mackinnon’s project. Where *Justine* had secured production funding, its explicitly Scottish successor had failed, impeded by what I argue was a heavily London-centric view of where and what may constitute a fundable artists’ film. In principle, this stasis endured until the formation of the SAC’s own film committee in 1979, a discrepancy of seven years (Scottish Arts Council Film and Video Committee, 1979). For its second meeting (16 November 1979), Mackinnon submitted an application of £1,500 in research and development funding for a project titled *Boswell’s Journal of a Tour to the*

Hebrides, after James Boswell's 1785 namesake travelogue (Scottish Arts Council Film Committee, 1979). Likely the same documentary project, that application was deferred and no further record suggests that its funding was granted. In 1982, Mackinnon formed the production company Trade Films—responsible for left-wing political films including *The Miners' Campaign Tapes* (1984)—leaving the avant-garde context behind. Though typical of an emerging Brechtian cinema, *Justine*, then, is a relative anomaly both within Mackinnon's oeuvre and the history of Scottish avant-garde filmmaking. In this way, its inclusion in *The International Forum on Avant-Garde Film* was of little disruption to their cultivation of a certain set of definitions developing around avant-garde practice, founded upon heady notions of internationalism which overlooked local, non-metropolitan approaches.

The screenings of *The International Forum on Avant-Garde Film* were contextualised by panel discussions involving a prestigious cohort of filmmakers and theorists with diverse positions on the field, including exhibiting filmmakers and organisers alongside Chantal Akerman, Raymond Bellour and others (*International Forum on Avant-Garde Film*, 1976). Interviewed recently, Myles (quoted in Knowles, 2017, p. 301) reflected on how unusual this assembly was: 'what was interesting about that event in 1976 was that a lot of people hadn't met because at the time there was no real locus for them to do so.' Rather than corroborating Wollen's theory of oppositional positions, Myles (2017, p. 302) recalls 'a certain amount of mutual respect and curiosity about one another's work [...] they were terribly pleased to meet. I think there hadn't been an event that brought all them together.'

Whilst these discussions appear undocumented, a sense of the forum's scale and reception can be recovered through dispersed archival material. Unusually—even hypocritically—the forum was funded by the ACGB Artists' Film and Video Sub-Committee despite its location. In a later report, ACGB Assistant Film Officer David Curtis (1984, Appendix 1) details a list of grant funding for exhibition in which the forum was in fact the single largest awardee between 1972 and 1984, receiving £6,400, and the only Scotland-based recipient. Mulvey and Sue Clayton (2017, p. 8) have reflected elsewhere that 'perhaps paradoxically, state financial support, particularly through the British Film Institute and the Arts Council [of Great Britain], made a crucial contribution to the intellectual infrastructure of the radical film movement.' Their large investment notwithstanding, funder expectations seem to have been exceeded. Lloyd (2011, p. 52) reports that the sub-committee expressed their satisfaction with

the forum. Whilst the forum attracted 130 attendees, the festival writ large enjoyed a 20% rise in box office sales and 33% increase in press and delegate attendance (Lloyd, 2011, p. 51).

This did not, however, indicate unilateral appreciation. In one newspaper review titled ‘It’s time the Film Festival was run for the public—and not for these “experts,”’ critic Molly Plowright diagnosed a growing objection to the over-intellectualism of the festival (Knowles, 2017, p. 304). Disregarding the edition’s empirical successes, EIFF co-founder Forsyth Hardy also voiced concerns; Lloyd (2011, p. 52) describes a meeting of the Executive Committee Members (26 November 1976) in which Hardy stated severe disapproval of Myles’ programming policy and increased investment in theoretical work. Hardy (1992, p. 130) revisited this critique in his history of the festival, expressing fear that the organisers had endangered its mission ‘to make available to as large an audience as possible films distinguished by imagination or experiment which otherwise they might not have been able to see and by so doing to encourage their production.’ In its vision of intellectualism and internationalism, EIFF jeopardised its traditional audience and, significantly too, its local filmmaking community.

By 1976, EIFF had arguably become a proxy for London’s film culture, shown in the profile of its participants and subsidy. Bar Mackinnon, *The International Forum on Avant-Garde Film* omitted any representation of developments of artists’ film in Scotland. Robin MacPherson (2014, p. 38) has described this as one of the major contradictions of Scottish film culture, that whilst EIFF forged space for pioneering new voices, ‘most Scottish filmmakers, even when sympathetic to left-wing politics, largely shunned these radical critiques of film form and style as an inherently ideological practice, in contrast with a perspective increasingly influential amongst the independent film sector in England.’ EIFF, then, occupies an unusual place in this historical narrative: a powerful agent in importing radical ideas to the country whilst enduring a relative distance from developments on its doorstep.

2.6.2 Edinburgh International Film Festival in decline, 1978–1979

The comprehension of filmmaking as *ideological practice* was further embedded within the 1977 festival. For the second year, EIFF’s annual publication eschewed auteur study for an ambiguous focus on *History / Production / Memory*, in which they explained their role as ‘intervening in the politics of British film culture through the examination of film not as a pre-determined object for consumption but as a practice, an ideological practice’ (Edinburgh International Film Festival, 1977, p. 5).

In 1978, EIFF returned attention to the avant-garde and hosted the first screenings of a joint ACGB and British Council touring project selected by David Curtis and Deke Dusinberre, *A Perspective on English Avant-Garde Film* (Curtis, 1984, Appendix 6). Inspired by the earlier Hayward Gallery exhibition, *Perspectives on British Avant-Garde Film* (1977) (O'Pray, 1996, p. 17), the subsequent tour is readily misidentified as *A Perspective on British Avant-Garde Film* by Hickey (1982, p. 72) amongst others—telling, perhaps, of the frequent conflation of British and English. At EIFF, the screenings:

showcased the cinema that had developed in the ten years since the inception of the Film Co-op in 1966. The catalogue included writings by Gidal, Le Grice, Wollen, Dwoskin, Nicolson, Curtis and Dusinberre. Its nine programmes displayed the hegemony of the structural-formalist school with the exceptions of Stuart Brisley, David Larcher and Jeff Keen. (O'Pray, 1996, p. 17)

Still more confusing, the 1978 festival also hosted a separate strand titled *New British Avant-Garde Films*, curated by James Mackay, an Inverness-born member of the LFMC and latterly producer to Derek Jarman (Mackay, 2017, p. 4). Mackay's package comprised five programmes of new work and replicated a number of the filmmakers involved in Curtis and Dusinberre's tour including Gidal, Le Grice, Guy Sherwin, John Smith and Chris Welsby.⁴³ Like EIFF's various avant-garde interactions before it, *New British Avant-Garde Films* primarily featured associates of the LFMC and failed to include any Scotland-based practitioners. Owing to considerable overlap in the concerns of these two packages, exacerbated by an incoherent overarching programming strategy, members of the LFMC expressed reasonable frustration at a meeting following the festival:

there was a discrepancy, not only between the 2 avant-garde programmes, but mainly in relation to the rest of the festival and other filmmakers. Hospitality by the festival was good but in spite of this and an impromptu 'party' (i.e. evening of free booze) on the Co-op's behalf, there was still no real contact with filmmakers, critics or anyone else! [...] There was a strong feeling of ghettoisation, both physically in that films were shown the other side of town from clubroom/preview theatre, and temporally in that films were all lumped together. [...] There was no platform for talk/common threshold. (London Film-Makers' Co-op, 1978)

Where experimental practices had once been shown side-by-side with mainstream filmmaking, Myles (quoted in Knowles, 2017, p. 304) even reflecting that there 'was no

⁴³ *New British Avant-Garde Films 1*: Malcolm Le Grice, Bon Fearn, David Parsons, John Smith, Chris Welsby. *New British Avant-Garde Films 2*: Ron Lane. *New British Avant-Garde Films 3*: Tim Cawkwell, Nicky Hamlyn, Will Milne, Anne Rees-Mogg. *New British Avant-Garde Films 4*: William Keddell, Jock McFadyen. *New British Avant-Garde Films 5*: Peter Gidal, Jenny Okun, Guy Sherwin, Penny Webb, Richard Welsby.

distinction in the programme at the time,' this equitable programming approach seems to have unwound by 1978. Some of these complaints were attached to the Festival's outsourcing of programmes, which were viewed as uncoupling avant-garde practice from wider filmmaking concerns. 'It was generally felt that packages not a good idea [*sic*], from either the [ACGB] or the Co-op,' the LFMC (1978) added, 'instead of working frantically for 2 months prior to the festival as James [Mackay] did, completely ignorant of what else was being programmed [...] a representative of the Co-op's members should be working with this committee now.'

It is essential to situate this perceived ostracism within the film-critical paradigm with which EIFF had become symbiotic. As Lloyd (2011, p. 56) notes, 'the Festival's reliance on a third group of actors, the theoretical critics, led to jeopardy when that group collapsed.' In 1976, four members of *Screen*'s board resigned, specifying irreconcilable frustration with the journal's dogmatic position, 'analysis,' they said, 'that confronts one ill-defined monolith (classical or mainstream cinema, 'Hollywood-Mosfilm') with another (the passive audience) and leaves only space for the avant-garde' (Buscombe et al., 1976, p. 108). As the primacy of the avant-garde within such discourse was met with increasing hostility, emphases on film theory began to concede ground to a newfound focus on British filmmaking necessitated by a resurgence in production which followed the 1976 formation of the Association of Independent Producers (AIP). Notably, whilst EIFF 1978 abnegated the LFMC, it included a one-day conference organised by the AIP, symbolising a transfer in priorities from theory to production.

Similar complaints echoed in responses to the *Feminism and Cinema* event at EIFF 1979, which recalled *The Women's Film Festival* of 1972. Myles (quoted in Knowles, 2017, p. 302) remembers that 'views had become much more polarised and the arguments were pursued much more aggressively,' whereas 'in 1972 it was very much a common cause.' Her penultimate year as director, the 1979 edition also featured a flagship midnight screening of Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) and *Documentary 50*, a fifty-year hagiography of the genre beginning with John Grierson. The changing shape of these activities reflected another revision in the expectations and purpose of EIFF and film exhibition more broadly. It is essential to frame this apparent undoing within its turbulent socio-political context, firstly the failure of James Callaghan's Labour government resulting in widespread strikes (1978–

1979), then the successful campaign of Thatcherism. Mulvey (Clayton and Mulvey, 2017, p. 12) articulates the twofold effect of this on film exhibition:

The Conservative Party victory of 1979 [...] came as a blow to the sector as a whole. The new government's policy on the arts [...] had an immediate impact on funding; but also, and just as importantly, it was hard to maintain the utopian spirit, the hope in the future, that had inspired 1970s filmmaking and other activities and activism.

By 1980, EIFF had mostly ceased to figure as an agent in the development of artistic film and video. During Jim Hickey's tenure as Artistic Director (1981–1988), a handful of sporadic profiles—returning to an auteur-led conception of programming—showcased the work of artist-filmmakers like Peter Greenaway. Linked to the exclusively London-based cohort of emerging New Romantic filmmakers like Jarman, Greenaway represents a form of avant-garde practice entirely without comparison in Scotland. Wollen (1996, p. 251) recalls the EIFF premiere of his feature *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982):

I was nauseated by the excess of Englishness, the hyperbolic heaping of English language on English acting on English landscape on English country-house murder on English preciousness and whimsy, the dilettantish celebration of eccentricity and games-playing.

Like his contemporaries, Greenaway's inspection of Englishness was, by definition, illustrative of an avant-garde that could no longer claim universality. Both a function of and response to Thatcherism, *The Draughtsman's Contract* and its contemporaries enacted and concerned the polarisation of social classes, and, as Wollen (1996, p. 236) argues, of North and South. In this period, the collapsing of English and Scottish work into a British whole becomes untenable as the subjects, techniques, resources and infrastructures of artists' film and video diverge. With EIFF and the SAC abdicating custody for the artistic engagement with film and video, a new infrastructure was required. In the 1980s, this emerged where artists in Glasgow and Dundee began to forge their own conditions of production and exhibition, peer-led and, for the first time, without deference to the London engine.

Chapter Three: 1980–1989

3.1 Film and video in the free market era

Following a decade of economic turbulence, culminating in the Winter of Discontent (1978–1979) and 1979 energy crisis, the United Kingdom fell into a severe recession in early 1980. Inflation, indicated by the retail price index, peaked at 21.9% in May 1980 and remained high into 1983 (Rodgers and Sedghi, 2013). In this period, unemployment soared to an official figure of 11.9% of the UK workforce by 1984 (Office for National Statistics, 2020). In Scotland these forces were especially acute, one report recording unemployment at 15.2% (1.16 times the national average) in August 1984, the regions of Strathclyde and the West Highlands amongst the worst affected (Salt, 1985, pp. 352–353). The recession and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s policy response of privatisation and public spending reform had deep ramifications for the arts infrastructure in Scotland. Firstly, these forces directly impacted the distribution of the Scottish Arts Council’s grant-in-aid, but, I argue, also precipitated indirect and ideological changes to artistic production as it related to audiences and social purpose.

As noted, in 1980 the SAC closed its Charlotte Square gallery in Edinburgh, turning it into office space with the expectation of releasing £70,000 in exhibition costs (Connelly, 1980). By 1984, the SAC withdrew tenancy of their last remaining gallery space at the Fruit Market complex too—reportedly following the lobbying of neighbouring tenants, the New 57 Gallery (Lowndes, 2010, p. 67)—leading to the establishment of a new independent organisation, the Fruitmarket Gallery (1984–). Sarah Lowndes (2010, p. 67) suggests that one of the factors in this decision had been the increasingly incompatible responsibilities of administering public subsidy and curating a space. In other words, the singular position which the multifunctional SAC had held since 1967 now harboured too many conflicts of interest. In focusing solely on the distribution of subsidy—which it could do without Government interference, owing to the *double arm’s length* arrangement (Galloway and Jones, 2010, p. 29)—the SAC might instead facilitate the operation of the Scottish arts sector as a reproduction, for better or worse, of the free market proper, in which independent organisations compete for its funding, purportedly breeding innovation in the process.

At this time a programme of aggressive public spending reform trickled through the SAC and controversially marked one casualty in its former neighbour, the Richard Demarco Gallery. By 1980, their SAC grant had grown to £42,000, doubling in real value over the decade (Fletcher, 1981). Despite this, the gallery had accrued a deficit of £39,000 by October that year (Fletcher, 1981), following what Demarco (1980) describes as ‘never receiving adequate funding to carry out the expensive business of internationalising The Scottish Art World.’ In early 1981, the SAC withdrew its annual grant, offering to match any funding raised, through the sale of prints by Joseph Beuys and via donations, to the discharge of the RDG’s deficit (Demarco, 1980). This precipitated a drastic downscaling. Cordelia Oliver (1981, p. 11) decried the defunding, ascribing it to a cultural shift wherein the SAC now tended ‘toward the reactionary (to put it as politely as possible).’ This, she argued, was symptomatic of an endemic contempt: ‘Scotland holds the visual arts and any attempt to fertilise the local soil for their better understanding and enjoyment in very low esteem as compared with anything that happens in the performing arts’ (Oliver, 1981, p. 11). Later that year, the SAC itself prepared for a financial impasse. Against soaring inflation, they communicated their anticipation of a cash standstill for 1982/1983 to its portfolio of seventy-five grant recipients, expressing that ‘it would be difficult for companies to maintain their level of activity unless they could find other sources of money’ (Wilson, 1981). In practice, the SAC’s grant-in-aid actually increased in step with or above inflation rates—£7.7m in 1980; £8.6m in 1981; £9.7m in 1982 and £10.8m in 1983 (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1981, p. 83, 1982, p. 52, 1983, p. 60). It is notable, however, that in this period the visual arts became the only SAC-funded artform to face cuts, expenditure in this area down from £724, 220 in 1981 to £697,373 in 1982 (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1982, p. 55). Therein, the SAC articulated a prioritisation of other cultural forms, corroborating Oliver’s critique.

A cautious conservatism, meanwhile, was embedded further into the curatorial strategies of the country’s largest institutions. Craig Richardson (2011, p. 110) notes that in the 1980s the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, for instance, embraced a policy of ‘risk avoidance in modern art.’ This, he argues, ensured that ‘Scottish art’s true innovation centre has always lain elsewhere.’ Such developments were paralleled amongst film exhibitors. Edinburgh International Film Festival, as seen, pursued an increasingly commercial orientation under a new directorship—the 1982 Opening Gala slot, for instance, was accorded to Steven Spielberg’s family blockbuster *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982). Amongst the most marginal of practices, then, artists’ film and video faced abandonment by the existing infrastructure.

Whilst old ways of working disappeared, I will argue in this chapter that this hostile decade produced a wholesale reshuffle of the available provision in which emerged three novel contexts for the production of moving image whose impacts endure today: the rebooted space of broadcast, the art school and the artist-run initiative.

3.1.1 The Scottish Film Production Fund and Channel 4, 1982–1990

In 1982, the beleaguered arrival of the first public film subsidy in Scotland, the Scottish Film Production Fund (1982–1997), and the fourth terrestrial television service in the UK, Channel 4 (1982–) inaugurated a dramatic shift in the economies of moving image production for some filmmakers. Until the early 1990s, these two bodies, often in tandem, produced a supportive infrastructure that would encourage the development of a small but industrious cohort of production companies based in Scotland. The SFPF was founded in June 1982 with £80,000 of funding (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1983a). By its second year, this had grown to £103,000, a sum, even then, that chairman Ian Lockerbie considered ‘derisory’ (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1983a). Given these limitations, the fund would rarely support production in full. In its initial applicant guidance, it detailed four areas eligible for financing: pre-production including script development; production funding where ‘substantial support is already being sought or has been secured from other sources’; post-production; and support for promotion or ‘the development of future productions in general’ (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1982a).

From its inception, the fund necessitated a model of coproducing to which the nascent Channel 4 offered an ideal partnership. As a *publisher-broadcaster*, all of Channel 4’s broadcasting was sourced from competing independents, advancing, on the one hand, an exemplary Thatcherite economic model, and on the other, offering the rich possibility of marginal, specialist interest programming. John Caughie (1990, p. 23) describes this as ‘wonderfully paradoxical.’ Channel 4, he argues, ‘created the conditions for an expanding independent production sector [which] in turn has created not only more, but more diverse films and programmes and representations.’ Lockerbie (1990, p. 175) credits Channel 4’s impact such that the entire UK cinema sector became ‘heavily dependent’ on it, noting, ‘nowhere is that more the case than in Scotland.’ Over time, the partnership between Channel 4 and the SFPF developed into a supply agreement, formalised by direct contributions to the fund and latterly via broadcast commissioning schemes. By 1990, for instance, the SFPF’s income had grown to a still relatively modest £216,500, bolstered by sums of £65,000 from

the BBC and £50,000 from Channel 4, outweighing SAC/SFC contributions (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1990a). Despite being an ostensibly independent body with none of the commission contingencies of its antecedents, I would argue that the SFPF, with its inextricable links to broadcast, cannot be reasonably examined apart from these platforms.

Upon launching, the fund staked its remit ‘to foster film and video production in Scotland, by assisting in the creation of a cinema which represents and reflects on aspects of Scottish life and society’ (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1983a). In practice, Lockerbie (1990, p. 173) acknowledged,

the development of a national cinema was interpreted to mean the support of works that fell within the mainstream of contemporary film and television. This allowed for a range of different kinds of film not excluding the odd avant-garde or experimental work, and occasionally, an amateur or community production. But the preference was clearly for professional work, capable of appealing to substantial audiences.

Disbursement, in effect, was generally made on projections of audience appeal, a rationale which attracted considerable public scrutiny. A decade after launching, Colin McArthur (1993, p. 30) published a scathing critique of the SFPF’s impact on the artform; ‘to put it bluntly,’ he writes, ‘Scotland is, on the film-making front, a third world-country—but this is tragically misrecognised by those holding the purse strings.’ In ignoring its cultural context and replicating the dominant models of globalised industrial film production, the SFPF, he argued, squandered investment and froze out alternative voices who might contribute to a healthier production environment: ‘those projects most rooted in Scottish culture and most challenging to the dominant ideology of production are actively opposed if not as a matter of explicit policy by these bodies, then by powerful voices within them’ (1993, p. 31). Rebuking such complaints, Lockerbie (1990, p. 173) contended that it was ‘by no means certain that by promoting widely disseminated work at the grassroots we would have achieved anything other than the continued absence of Scottish images from our screens.’

In this way, the SFPF was not by design a resource for those on the experimental periphery. Nevertheless, it bore a handful of projects which intersected with such modes of production. As prior commissioning policies had opened themselves to subterfuge—most notably the SAC’s *films about art* directive—so too was the SFPF used to realise moving image with alternative motivations. Between 1982 and 1990, the SFPF supported around forty-four film and video productions (Scottish Screen, 1997). At their most unorthodox, these included projects by Tom McGrath and Stephen Partridge (*Two Reelers*, 1985); Cranhill Films (*Clyde*

Film, 1985); and experimental animator Lesley Keen (*Orpheus and Eurydice*, 1984; *Invocation*, 1984; *Burrellesque*, 1990; *Ra: The Path of the Sun God*, 1990).

Taking their name from the two-reel comedy shorts of the silent era, *Two Reelers* was an ensemble of five ‘videodramas’ of around forty minutes that were accorded £4,300 for pre-production in the first year of the SFPF (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1983a, Appendix 1). The project’s eccentric promotional material reads: ‘portly playwright, Tom McGrath, has joined forces with skinny video artist, Stephen Partridge, and four sexy new actors [...] to produce five comic playlets for television. [...] See them at your local fleapit now!’ (*Two Reelers*, 1985). It continues, describing an array of vignettes featuring gag-named characters like Roger Roger and Cathy Cathode, ‘the soap opera ghost in your TV set.’ Combining formalist video art’s enduring preoccupation with the semiotics of televisual media and McGrath’s riotous theatre of society, the suite seems to resist easy categorisation. Its circulation as neither gallery installation nor cinema screening, but as a limited-edition mail-order VHS tape and touring scheme—complete with display equipment—further testifies to its unusual cultural form.

Another non-broadcast project, *Clyde Film* was the work of community group Cranhill Films whose membership comprised painter Ken Currie, alongside Ian Venart, Charlie Tracey, Ian Miller, Mandy Merrick and Alistair McCallum. Shot on 16mm, *Clyde Film* was formed in the image of an earlier wave of Glasgow films in depicting scenes of squalor and industrial decline.⁴⁴ Redoubled for the Thatcherite era, the trope of Clydesidism finds its apotheosis here in the direct juxtaposition of archival and contemporary footage: frantic industrial machinery followed by eerily quiet, derelict warehouses; new postwar housing schemes revisited as condemned sites; happy workers and unemployment offices (Venart *et al.*, 1985). The film stakes a key difference, however, in its poetic structure. Developing upon an earlier Super 8 short, *Glasgow 1984* (1984), *Clyde Film* uses no voices, employing instead a dark electronic sound design of found audio and folk song. Abstraction plays a role in its storytelling, departing from the narrative drama and expository documentary style of earlier work. After thirty years, the film was first shown again at the Glasgow Short Film Festival 2015, the catalogue introduction to which reports that ‘the script was developed collectively, based on the poetry of local writer Freddy [*sic*] Anderson, and all production decisions were

⁴⁴ See discussion of Oscar Marzaroli’s *Dear Green Place* (c.1968), Jon Schorstein’s KH-4 (1969) or Mike Bolland’s *Mind Your Fingers* (1971) in sections 2.3.3 and 2.5.2.

made on the basis of “collective decision-making, cooperation and sharing of ideas” (Lloyd, 2015, p. 67). Beyond form, then, *Clyde Film* can also be said to have eschewed the auteurist convention as the democratised endeavour of six voices, threading its on-screen socialist politics through the film’s very production. In this way, Cranhill Films also echoed the model of Charles Bukelis’s earlier agitprop filmmaking initiative, the Dawn Cine Group.

Amongst the most prolific beneficiaries of the fund, however, was Lesley Keen and the kaleidoscopic, hand-drawn oeuvre of her company Persistent Vision (1982–1999). A graphic design graduate of The Glasgow School of Art, showing at *Glasgow Film Makers* whilst still a student (Keen, 1973), Keen trained at Barrandov Studios, Prague, before returning to Scotland and joining the pool of independent freelancers in 1979. Ahead of the launch of Channel 4, Keen (2020) recalls its Glaswegian founder Jeremy Isaacs visiting on ‘an evangelising tour,’ announcing that the channel would have a positive Scottish bias and inviting filmmakers to ‘dig out whatever you’ve got in your bottom drawer and send it in.’ Keen (2020) remembers Channel 4 then only comprising a handful of commissioning editors, including Naomi Sargent whose remit was educational programming. With Sargent’s support, Keen developed the storyboard *Taking a Line for a Walk* (1983), inspired by artist Paul Klee’s eponymous instruction, and gained funding from the SFPC, compliant to the SAC’s *films about art* directive. The short work is lauded as one of the two films backed by this intermediary committee, alongside *Another Time, Another Place* (1983), Mike Radford’s first feature (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1983a).⁴⁵

To fit the block-based broadcast schedule and satisfy its educational context, Keen’s eleven-minute animation was shown twice with an expository documentary by Mike Alexander placed between screenings, augmenting the second viewing by revealing its mechanics (Keen, 2020). This sense of pedagogical framing was also manifest in an accompanying booklet which provides a biography of Klee and a history of relevant animation theories and techniques, citing the influence of Walt Disney, Norman McLaren and the Czech school (Keen, 1983). In this publication, Keen (1983, p. 24) expressly considers *Taking a Line for a Walk*’s own category, which she terms *an animated art film*, writing,

Great care was taken to preserve the integrity of Paul Klee’s work. To do this, it was necessary to define what separates a work of art from a commercial product. By definition, commercial ‘art’ is explicit, perceived on a conscious level, whereas fine

⁴⁵ Radford had been a member of the roving video crews involved with the SAC’s exhibition *Open Circuit* (1973).

art is implicit, presupposing the subconscious participation of the individual to complete the meaning of the work [...] much more action had to be included in the film than can be consciously grasped and assimilated at one viewing.

Distinguishing between mainstream and fine art filmmaking approaches via their engagement with viewer psychology, Keen aligns her practice with the intention of abstract visual artists. Animation, for her, was a means to ‘explore concepts that could only be visualised in that medium in the days before digital image processing became accessible’ (Keen, 2020), though the critical context for this work was not always clear: ‘the main problem was that the art establishment didn’t regard animation as an artform [...] and the animation fraternity looked at what I did and were like, [...] “what’s that? It’s not cartoons”’ (Keen, 2020). In this way, Keen’s practice sat quite outside of the structures of her avant-garde contemporaries: ‘it was just me and my light box up in the attic, in glorious isolation from everything and anything. [...] *Taking a Line for a Walk* was something that I thought of as potentially being art but I had all sorts of people completely misinterpreting it’ (Keen, 2020). In 1991, the film was accorded some overdue institutional recognition through its inclusion in a six-part Tate Gallery retrospective of the previous twenty-five years of avant-garde filmmaking in Britain (Tate Gallery, 1991).

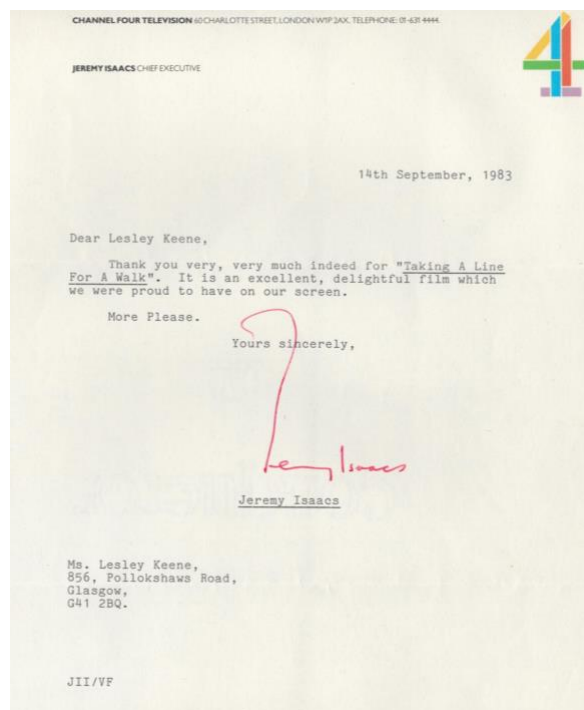


Figure 27: Isaacs, J. (1983) Letter to L. Keen, 14 September. Courtesy of Lesley Keen.

In the early 1980s, Channel 4 also became active in the funding of an independent television workshop movement in partnership with local councils. This followed the Workshop

Declaration of 1982 which formalised an agreement between Channel 4 and the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT) to allow independent filmmaking groups—unwaged or dependent on contract work and therefore ineligible for union representation—to produce work for broadcast within a training framework and with continuous funding (Holdsworth, 2017). This permitted the development of specialist groups organised around issues such as women’s rights (Red Flannel; Sheffield Film Co-op), racial justice (Black Audio Film Collective; Sankofa Film and Video Collective; Ceddo Film and Video Workshop) and class (Amber Films; Trade Films) (Andrews, 2011, p. 205). *The Eleventh Hour* (1982–1988) was then established as the broadcast platform for much of this production: a dedicated space for independent, radical and experimental film and video in a weekly late-night slot (Andrews, 2011). As many as forty-four groups were in receipt of Channel 4 funding by 1988 (Fountain, 2007, p. 36). Excepting the Edinburgh Film Workshop Trust and Video in Pilton (MacPherson, 2014, p. 39)—the former being responsible for issue-based documentaries like Sarah Noble’s *Site One: Holy Loch* (1985), Alistair Scott’s *Leithers* (1988) and a novel ‘Women’s Unit’—Scotland-based practitioners were, however, mostly absented from Channel 4’s support.⁴⁶ Caughie (1990, p. 25) notes that through this omission,

What was lost in the early eighties in Scotland was something more than the opportunity for some low-budget, avant-garde political films to be shown on television late on Monday nights. [...] The Workshop Movement has been an important, innovative and committed component within the infrastructure.

The training, visibility and network which the workshops provided had, for instance, charged the careers of internationally renowned artists John Akomfrah and Isaac Julien. The dissonance, therefore, between Channel 4’s support for filmmaking in Scotland and its support of the (English) avant-garde presents the implication that the two were mutually exclusive. As I believe the work of Keen proves, however, this did not amount to the prevention of experimental work from Scotland manifesting elsewhere. As Keen (2020) remembers, ‘everything I did had to have an educational bias on paper even though it didn’t have in reality.’ Through her unique relationship with the Education Department, she was able to replicate the formula with a second film, *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1984).

⁴⁶ Though Trade Films’ Stewart Mackinnon had earlier found himself caught between Scottish and English arts councils, as discussed in section 2.6.1.

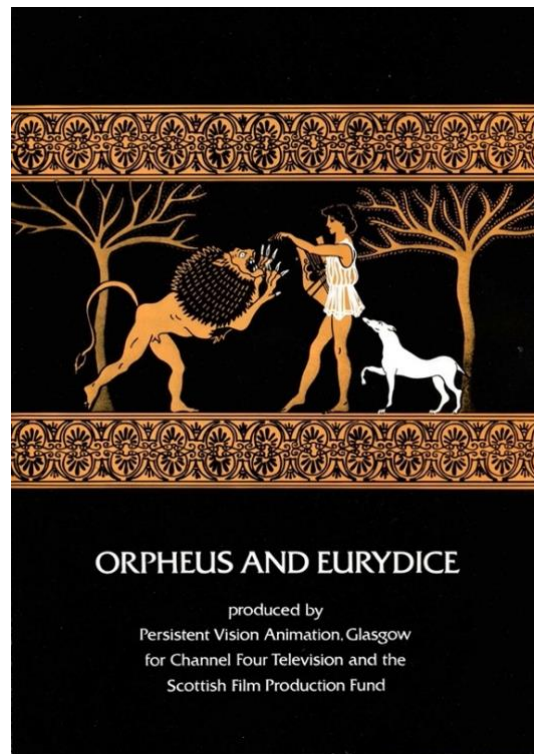


Figure 28: Channel 4 (1984) *Orpheus and Eurydice*. [Promotional brochure] Courtesy of Lesley Keen.

Orpheus and Eurydice retold its eponymous myth through an animation style derived from ancient Greek pottery whilst also exhibiting the characteristic flow of Keen's other films. Through a synthesised sound design by the composer Lyell Cresswell, steeped in industrial influence, the animation's studious replication of classical imagery is inflected with a sinister tone. In September 1982, the project was amongst the earliest submitted to the newly established SFPF (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1982b). It was also one of the largest, awarded £9,838 in addition to Channel 4 contributions (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1983a, Appendix 1). Like *Taking a Line for a Walk*, Keen's animation was contextualised by a documentary directed by Alexander. That work, *Orpheus Through the Ages* (1985), garnered some of its own success, winning a Scottish Television and Radio Industries Club award in 1985 (Keen, 2020). Mapping the myth's interpretation in art, music and literature over time, Alexander's documentary included excerpts of Jean Cocteau's *Orphic Trilogy* and an additional three-minute animation by Keen, *Invocation* (1984), illustrating the ancient Greek creation myth—*The Orphic Theogony*—through a sinuous and psychedelic stream of images made via backlit holes drilled into paper, coloured by gels (Channel 4, 1984). In November 1984, *Invocation* was supplemented by a further £1,290 in post-production funding from the SFPF (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1984).



Figure 29: Keen, L. (1984) *Invocation*. [16mm film, colour] Courtesy of Lesley Keen.

The documentary's screenwriter Jan Čulík produced a publication of the same name, which, as before, provided a historical and educational frame for Keen's production. Placing *Orpheus and Eurydice* in a lineage of high-cultural engagements with the ancient myth, the publication stakes out a context for the animation that transcends the televisual frame. Where theatre and live action filmmaking were delimited by linear viewing experiences, animation offered the formal possibility of vanquishing such conventions. Referencing the repeat patternation of Greek pottery, *Orpheus and Eurydice* exploited animation's potential to loop perfectly. As Čulík (1985, p. 26) writes, 'the cyclical structure of this one-shot film underlines the futility of Orpheus's actions: suspended in time, the story is being repeated ad infinitum.'

Melding form and subject, Keen's animations exhibited many of the characteristics of structuralist film as articulated by Peter Gidal a decade prior. Through their hand drawn frames, they provide a 'record of [their] own making' (Gidal, 1978, p. 2). In their absolute flatness, they omit the illusion of 'representational content' (1978, p. 2). In their abstraction, they abandon dominant cinema's 'passive viewer' (1978, p. 3), demanding a viewer's activation in coproducing meaning. And, in their loops, patterns and repeats they reveal the procedures through which duration—the 'basic unit' of film (1978, p. 8)—is created. In these many ways, Keen's work intimated an avant-garde position. Perhaps it exceeds coincidence, then, that in articulating his view of duration as the material of film, Gidal transposes writing by Klee, of all artists, who claimed that painting is itself durational, 'built up piece by piece' (Klee quoted in Gidal, 1978, p. 8).

Whilst a concern for the reconceptualisation of film certainly runs through Keen's practice, her preoccupation with another of Klee's precepts, *the unconscious mind*, marks a clear break from the puritanical asceticism of 1970s structuralism. Jungian psychology, fantasy, mythology and spiritualism—and the vibrant aesthetics thereof—were in direct contradiction to what Catherine Elwes (2015, p. 149) has called structuralism's 'prohibition on narrative and visual pleasure.' Keen, it is important to note, was working in the same few years in which newer 'anti-modernist' movements like the New Romanticist film of Derek Jarman or Cerith Wyn Evans had begun to offer a rebuttal to structuralism's rejection of the cinematic (Wollen, 1996). More than a visual, in the mid-1980s fantastical images had a countercultural, political significance.

Having lithely navigated the SAC's *films about art* directive and subsequently satisfied the educational remit of Channel 4, quite apart from the better-known workshop movement, Keen sustained an uncompromisingly experimental mode of practising that is not easily reconciled within the historical paradigms used to describe the development of artists' film in the UK. On her place in cultural production, Keen (2020) offers the view that:

Because of the visual arts environment of the time, I couldn't have said 'I am a video artist' because that didn't exist. You had to find a way of doing something inside the existing structures. Channel 4 had a very open mind at the beginning because they wanted to do something different and they encouraged people who didn't know how to produce. [...] It was a golden period where there was money to experiment with things and nobody knew to tell you not to do it, because the people who were commissioning us knew even less about it than we did.

The partnership of the SFPF and Channel 4 which Keen had brokered would continue to support her up until the production of *Ra: The Path of the Sun God* (1990), her feature-length 'magnum opus' (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1991a, p. 6).

Approaching its second decade, the SFPF pursued an increasingly mainstream agenda, reflected too in the direction of Channel 4. Still under a Conservative government, the broadcaster began phasing out its funded workshop programmes in 1989 and the Broadcasting Act of 1990 introduced further deregulation to the sector, compelling Channel 4 to sell its own advertising, thereby putting broadcasters into more explicit competition. In practice, this heralded a new focus on the mass market and an end to the most specialist programming which pulled in smaller audiences, including *The Eleventh Hour* (Andrews, 2011, p. 218). Whilst this policy analysis provides one elegant explanation for these shifts, Stephen Partridge (2012, p. 85) puts it more bluntly, 'after the early 90s, UK broadcasters lost

interest in film and video artists. They had in any case appropriated any innovation that they felt artists had to offer, and the uneasy collaborations and alliances were now at an end.’ Regardless of the motivation, as Hannah Andrews (2011, p. 215) argues, ‘this level of public access to experimental work has never since been replicated.’ Concurrent with the rise of video projection in the gallery, the significant extent of artist-filmmakers’ dependency on the exhibition space and economic support of broadcast also dissipated.

In subsequent years, the fund supported the production of Margaret Tait’s lifelong project and only feature *Blue Black Permanent* (1992) with £55,000 (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1993, p. 9). This award represented a concession upon a years-long string of rejected applications from its women-led production team including Barbara Grigor, Kate Swan and Penny Thomson.⁴⁷ In the same funding round, co-founder of Sankofa Film and Video Collective, Maureen Blackwood’s *A Family Called Abrew* (1992) was also awarded £10,000 of a requested £20,568.73 (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1991b). Mapping the eponymous Scottish Afro-Caribbean family whose members included dancer Lottie Abrew and boxers Manuel and Charlie Abrew, the documentary profiles an extraordinary pre-Windrush showbiz dynasty who offer a counter to certain narratives around Blackness and Scotland (Blackwood, 1992).



Figure 30: Blackwood, M. (1991) *A Family Called Abrew*. [16mm film, colour] Held at: London: British Film Institute.

⁴⁷ Including requests of £7,680 for project development in September 1986, £80,000 for production in December 1990, and another £80,000 for production in November 1991 (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1986, 1990b, 1991b).

Through such projects, the SFPPF began to facilitate—or simply reflect—a long-awaited revision of the white and male hegemony that persisted in the makeup of Scottish film production far longer than in comparable geographic contexts. This was by no means revolutionary. Following *Blue Black Permanent*, seven further years passed before another woman-directed feature would be made in Scotland: Lynne Ramsay's *Ratcatcher* (1999) (Chick, 2016, p. 3). Far from testifying to the development of a thriving, feminist production environment, this woeful record serves as a sharp indictment of public film subsidy in Scotland and its pursuit of the mainstream, an agenda of social reproduction that sanctioned the continuation of conservatism and, at its most pernicious, inequality. Though a handful of artists and experimental filmmakers were able to make effective use of the SFPPF, their numbers were low and certainly don't amount to a networked community. The establishment of any such community, whose links are continuous with the cultural context of today, would instead develop at first in the organising of a new generation of visual artists in Glasgow.

3.2 Towards a new custodian for film and video, 1980–1986

Support for film and video from national art institutions, as measured through representation amongst exhibitions and collections, remained absent throughout the 1980s. The first acquisition of a moving image work by a Scottish collection, as earlier noted, likely wasn't until 1993—over two decades after Tate—and only then by the venueless Scottish Arts Council Collection.⁴⁸ Just as Colin McArthur (1993) had argued in his critique of the Scottish Film Production Fund, that the engine of progressive film culture will always be peripheral, Craig Richardson (2011, p. 111) reflects a similar truth amongst Scottish visual arts:

The most apparently effective innovation in Scottish art has always been introduced and promoted by the smaller mission-led groups or individuals. [...] Claims that the major cultural institutions ought to initiate paradigm shifts in the visual arts are simply wrong.

The view that Scotland's cultural institutions harboured an almost political contempt for contemporary art, particularly homegrown, extends from Cordelia Oliver's 1981 article in defence of Richard Demarco through complainants periodically into the late 1990s. In 1997, former Head of Fine Art at The Glasgow School of Art, Pavel Büchler published a damning critique of the situation in the wake of the Gallery of Modern Art's recent opening. Büchler (1997, p. 2) again cites the treatment of Demarco, adding that 'the municipal cultural policies and practices of Edinburgh and Glasgow are putting the good name of the country at risk.' He continues, 'just as we seem to massively overrate the cultural importance of institutions and the "establishment," so we underestimate the oppressive power of mediocrity hidden within the institutional culture.' Fortunately, he resolves that 'the nation can be assured that cultural identity is not made up of institutions nor is it authenticated by them' (1997, p. 2).

3.2.1 The Third Eye Centre, 1980–1984

These views and more like them are instructive to the orientation of Scotland's art history after 1980 in that they advocate for a centralising of smaller-scale, grassroots activities and a separation from the legitimising power of the institution. In many ways, the SAC of the 1970s had represented the interests of the former, particularly within its experimental moving image projects like *Open Circuit* (1973) and *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* (1976). Following the withdrawal of its curatorial function, then, it left a gap in custody for the still-emerging practices of film and video. For another central promoter, the Third Eye Centre,

⁴⁸ Daniel Reeves' *Obsessive Becoming* (1990–1995) (Scottish Arts Council, 1994a).

engagements with the moving image continued but under shifting terms, which I argue reflected the organisation's own process of becoming institutional. Two overlapping strategies for exhibition-making would come to characterise this period: the touring initiative, shipped in and ambivalent to local artistic context; and the thematic survey show in which film and video became integrated, and thereby increasingly imperceptible, artforms.

A prime instance of this touring model, *Unpacking 7 Films* ran for three weeks at the TEC in June 1980 (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1980). Organised by David Curtis, the exhibition travelled to ten venues and comprised '8 panels of blown-up film images and texts, 10 programmes of films [and] broadsheets' (Curtis, 1984, Appendix 6). In this readymade way, *Unpacking 7 Films* was not at all responsive by design and across its 'fifty-odd' films, including works by John Smith and Guy Sherwin, demonstrated no intention of including Scotland—nor Wales or Northern Ireland—within its articulation of an 'alternative cinema' (Third Eye Centre, 1980). Deborah Jackson (Brown, Jackson and Mulholland, 2018, p. 157) notes that following Tom McGrath's departure, 'artists in the city were given fewer opportunities to exhibit as Third Eye attempted to be more "international" (which meant a return to importing touring exhibitions).' *Unpacking 7 Films* epitomised this new soft policy on importation. However, I might add that the relegation of local artists reflected another shift, one of target audience: from artist-centred to broader appeal; from facilitating discussion to a more didactic, educational function; from undertaking an unquantifiable work to becoming empirically evaluable—commensurate, of course, with the newly established political paradigm of Conservatism.

This educational reorientation helps contextualise an offshoot season of screenings, *The Alternative Screen* (9 October – 4 December 1980). Elaborating on 'issues raised' by *Unpacking 7 Films*, this series aimed 'to provide regular access to current independent work from Britain and abroad,' hoping to establish 'a forum where filmmakers, audiences, critics and teachers can come together to see and discuss films from an area of filmmaking previously unrepresented in Glasgow' (Third Eye Centre, 1980). Over five fortnightly Thursday evenings at the Glasgow Film Theatre, works by Robert Breer, Stephen Dwoskin, Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, Yvonne Rainer, Michael Snow and Joyce Wieland were selected to describe key developments in experimental filmmaking in the UK and North America. Noted that Rainer's *Journeys from Berlin/1971* (1980) will be shown later in the

series (Third Eye Centre, 1980), it is implied that further events were intended, though no evidence seems to exist of its doing so, nor any account of its reception.

As earlier noted, following McGrath's departure the TEC's developments are less well represented amongst archival materials. In effect, between 1977 and the centre's 1991 closure, an unknown number of exhibitions and events were organised with little organisational record. Recovery of these activities has leaned on intersecting sources, via the papers of Cordelia Oliver and Clare Henry whose collected writing offers an attentive, if subjective, chronology and through correspondence with Michael Tooby (Exhibitions Organiser, TEC, 1980–1984). In this respect, my research acknowledges a particularly acute gap in primary materials concerning the early 1980s period. For some, however, these years had in fact been characterised by dearth: a student of The Glasgow School of Art, 1980–1984, Malcolm Dickson (2020) tells me that for video artists 'it felt as though nothing had happened between 1976 and 1986.' Nonetheless, at least four events at the TEC can be recovered which might challenge the resolute dismissal of these years. More notable still, for the first time these centred the long-overlooked experience of women.

In 1981, the TEC hosted a number of large touring initiatives: *Art and the Sea* (17 January – 15 February 1981), and the interrelated exhibitions *Women's Images of Men* and *About Time: Installations, Video and Performances by Women Artists* (both 9–30 May 1981) (Tooby, 2021). *Art and the Sea* spanned nine galleries 'with maritime connections,' beginning with the TEC and concluding at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), with each venue drawing upon over 650 submissions to curate tailored presentations ('Calendar,' 1981, p. 192). At the TEC, London-based Patricia Whiteread showed *Rigor Mortis Pollution Piece B* (c.1981), a tape-slide work featuring 'a Mid-Atlantic-type male voice' (Whiteread, 2002). On the first day of the exhibition, the artist wore a black velvet suit and, in her own words, 'stood there [...] the slide projector shining on me,' as she 'read out statistics of pollution in the sea' (Whiteread, 2002).

Months later, Whiteread returned as a co-organiser of and participant in *Women's Images of Men* and *About Time*. Comprised exclusively of work by women—surveying plastic arts and photography, and 'video, performance, slide tapes and installations' respectively (Morreau and Elwes, 1985, p. 13)—these complementary shows toured six venues, starting at the ICA in 1980, accompanied by a feminist conference and programme of talks and screenings. *About Time* developed into an autonomous exhibition, the curators explain, 'when it became

obvious that images of men was an unsuitable theme for women performance artists' (Morreau and Elwes, 1985, p. 17). In this way, it also inculcated a supremacy of performance, in which other media were largely mobilised as documentation. *About Time* featured the work of twenty-one women chosen by artists Catherine Elwes, Rose Garrard and the ICA's Sandy Nairne from an open submission with the criteria that 'all works should indicate the artist's awareness of a woman's particular experience within the patriarchy' (Elwes, Garrard and Nairne, 1980). Alongside its fast-changing schedule of performance and tape-slide events, the exhibition included installations by Susan Hiller (*10 Months*, 1977–1979), Tina Keane (*See-Saw*, 1980) and Jane Rigby (*Counter Poise*, 1980) and videos by Marceline Mori (*Andro-gyne*, 1979) and Julie Sheppard (*The moment is different*, n.d.).⁴⁹ Whilst underpinned by a feminist revision of male-dominated forms, Whiteread (2002) remembers that the participants 'were all middle-class women.' Moreover, in their selection, the organising committee, perhaps unsurprisingly, reproduced the dominance of London-based practitioners, to the wholesale exclusion of women from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The TEC wasn't exclusively receptive to the touring phenomenon. In 1985, Tooby was the progenitor of *Visual Facts: Photography and Video by Eight Artists in Canada* (8 June – 6 July), a survey which moved to Canada House Gallery, London, and the Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield—travelling with its curator, then hired as Keeper at the Mappin (Lerner, 1997, p. 119). Developing upon years of research, beginning around 1981, *Visual Facts* featured video by Vera Frenkel, Anne Ramsden and Paul Wong, alongside the conceptual photography of Raymonde April, Barbara Astman, Sorel Cohen, Jeff Wall and Ian Wallace. Tooby (2021) remembers this being Wall's first show in the UK.

Beyond the touring circuit, many of the TEC's exhibitions remained contingent upon its network and critical consensus, often via an expansion upon imported ideas. After *About Time*, for instance, the TEC opened *5 Year Retrospective* (24 April – 1 May 1982), an exhibition of film, video and slide projection work by Tina Keane. Tooby (2021) cites this as an example of 'where having worked with an artist in such a survey show we made a "solo" presentation separately.' Though not especially novel, this pattern of repeat collaboration

⁴⁹ Based on documentation of the exhibition at the ICA (Elwes, Garrard and Nairne, 1980). It is unknown whether its restaging at the TEC involved variation on the original selection.

provides a counter to the critique that artists' support in the period had waned, reflecting instead, as Jackson notes, that international networks had taken precedence over local ones.

Documentation of Keane's show is remarkably scarce. A programme brochure, however, describes it as 'a rare opportunity to see virtually all her important work from the past five years' (Third Eye Centre, 1982). The brochure details a schedule that features presentations of her work *Playpen* (1979) in both a slide-tape version and live performance by the artist; her 16mm film *Shadow of a Journey* (1980) shot whilst crossing to the Isle of Skye; and a further slide-tape work *Clapping Songs* (1982). Shown continuously in the gallery was a wall-mounted neon piece, *Suzy*, and *See-Saw*, the same video installation shown a year prior in *About Time*. The only significant account of the retrospective that I've found comes from Henry (1982), for *The Glasgow Herald*:

Video art is notoriously difficult for most people to come to grips with. For those used to watching commercially produced TV films in sharp glossy colour, it comes as a shock, being frequently grey, out of focus and hard to see and hear. This unfortunately applies to Tina Keane's *Playpen* video tape where a good idea, women from 8 months to 80 years restricted behind playpen bars, was lost through poor quality technical reproduction. And though full of good ideas, too often Keane's work takes on a feminist stance. Even the children's clapping songs on her tape slide are programmed to emphasise her view that—subliminally—the traditional subservience of women is reinforced in the playground. [...] more interesting is her 'film-poem' *Shadow of a Journey* from the Isle of Skye and Harris where the abstracted wave patterns become an onrushing flow of psychedelic luminosity which saturates the speakers' consciousness.

Henry's review, seemingly her first dealing with film and video, imparts a number of reactionary values. Her principal complaint about the explicit feminist politics of Keane's *Playpen* and *Clapping Songs* is particularly illustrative of an outmoded attitude towards the contemporary, increasingly social, function of artistic practices. In this way, Henry reflects something of the enduring conservative attitude of the Scottish art establishment. At the same time, her more justifiable critique of the 'grey, out of focus' medium reflects a growing backlash against the aesthetic austerity of video, particularly of the formalist variant. Mick Hartney (1996, p. 46) elsewhere diagnoses a discrepancy between the instant audience appeal of real-time video installation and the oftentimes 'excruciatingly boring' single-screen tape:

Adherence to a pre-determined process in the production of a tape often meant that the viewer knew precisely what was going to happen long before it did. An ascetic suspicion of the notion of entertainment seemed to pervade the tendency and sought to deny artists use of the panoply of devices—tension, relief, surprise and sensory appeal—which elsewhere constitute time-based arts.

An unedited tape made ‘in-camera because I didn’t have any editing facilities’ (Keane quoted in Hatfield, 2005c, p. 6), at twenty-minutes duration, *Playpen* can arguably viewed as one casualty of such procedural drudgery. This repetitiousness gives way to linear storytelling, colour, musical devices and even humour in later films *Shadow of a Journey* and *Clapping Songs*, which, by no small coincidence, are closer to meeting Henry’s approval.

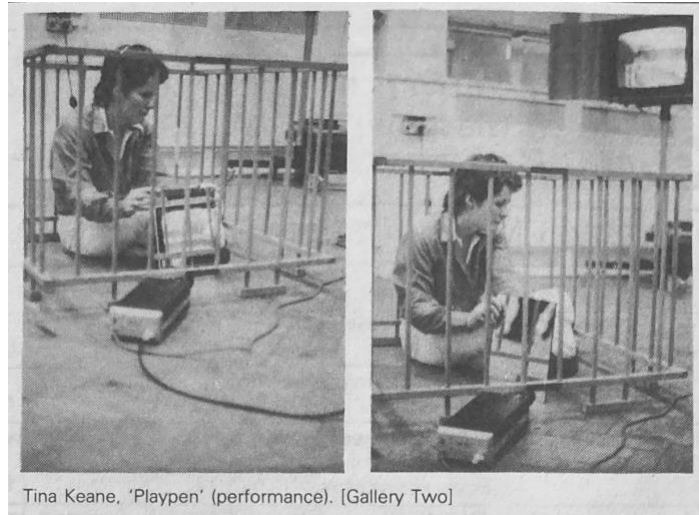


Figure 31: Third Eye Centre (1982), April. [Brochure] Courtesy of Michael Tooby.

In 1984, another of *About Time*’s participants, the American, London-based multimedia artist Susan Hiller, was similarly accorded a major retrospective at the TEC, with sister exhibitions staged at Orchard Gallery, Derry, and Gimpel Fils, London. *Ten Years’ Work* (March – April 1984), in Henry’s (1984) words, confirmed Hiller’s ‘position as one of Britain’s most sensitive and original artists.’ Where Keane’s exhibition was reprimanded for its frank messaging, Henry praised Hiller’s ‘exploratory thinking where she approaches subjects on different levels, analysing, documenting, interpreting, qualifying, deciphering.’ Noting that ‘what you see on first glance is just the tip of an intellectual, philosophical iceberg,’ the critic credits Hiller’s scientific background for the complexity of the exhibition’s more indirect expression. A preference is thereby suggested for work with more ambiguous, less forthright politics, perhaps distilling the Scottish audience’s attitude at large. A review by Cordelia Oliver (1984) also celebrated the procedural, detective-like quality of the encounter orchestrated between viewer and work; discussing the central installation *Monument* (1980–1981), she marvels at its interactivity: ‘without realising it you have entered the work itself.’ Though exact details about *Ten Years’ Work* are scarce, by the mid-1980s video, slide projection and audio were consistent features of Hiller’s practice. It is unclear, though certainly plausible that these media were also represented within that exhibition.

The TEC of the 1970s had offered its community more than access to exhibitions and their potential to influence, it had also served both to facilitate discussion and as a production hub—lending its video equipment and housing ‘one of the very first artist video reproduction and presentation “suites” in the UK’ (Tooby, 2021). Though film and video were then visibly integrated into the centre’s programming in the 1980s, by the start of Tooby’s tenure technical developments had already begun to outpace its production facilities: ‘this kit was so innovative [that] it was already leading to obsolescence issues even when I arrived’ (Tooby, 2021). Much of this responsibility was absorbed by the founding of the Glasgow Film and Video Workshop (GFVW) in 1982 and via the parallel development of media resources in art schools, particularly at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art after 1984.

The TEC maintained an active role in providing the space and context for debate, however, and in 1984 returned to conversations initiated almost a decade prior with a one-day event titled *Video Day: Does Video Art Have a Future in Scotland?* (18 February 1984). This event comprised presentation and discussion sessions, screenings of video by artists working in Scotland and an international selection, called forth as case studies in an attempt to define ‘art video’ (Third Eye Centre, 1984a). The international selection was partially informed by Tooby’s ongoing research for the *Visual Facts* exhibition and included video from Toronto-based General Idea’s fictional cocktail bar-cum-laboratory project *The Colour Bar Lounge* (General Idea, *Test Tube*, 1979) (Tooby, 2021). Scottish production was represented via contributions from Doug Aubrey—who later collaborated with Alan Robertson as Pictorial Heroes in producing distinctly political video—Ron Lane, and a further selection drawn from an open call (Third Eye Centre, 1984a).⁵⁰ The framing of the event was exploratory with the familiar intention of mapping facilities, interest and resources:

Art video has often been shown as part of Third Eye Centre’s exhibition programme and many projects are planned for the future, but the Centre has rarely been able to include Scottish work. The purpose of the VIDEO DAY is to discover whether art video is made in Scotland, and if so, how can it be made better or become more widely known? If video art does not exist, then why not? Is it lack of interest or lack of facilities to match interest? (Third Eye Centre, 1984a)

With striking resemblance to the discovery mission of *The Future of Video in Scotland* (1976) symposium, whose purpose was ‘to discuss questions of support, access and distribution’ (Krikorian, 1976b), the necessity of this event suggests that little progress had

⁵⁰ Lane had earlier shown at the Edinburgh International Film Festival’s *New British Avant-Garde Films* programme in 1978.

been made. *Video Day*, however, was reportedly a ‘successful and constructive event’ (Third Eye Centre, 1984b) leading to the proposition of a formalised network of videomakers for discussion at a subsequent meeting. This second meeting materialised as a one-day conference at DJCA (28 April 1984), convened by lecturer Stephen Partridge, with the objective of establishing said network’s aims, resolve its constitution, elect its officers and plan for future meetings (Partridge, 1984a). Partridge proposed functions for this association, including the organisation of an annual conference, the circulation of a questionnaire aimed at surveying membership needs, the monitoring of sectoral developments, and the preparation of a festival or exhibition of members’ work (Partridge, 1984b). Sadly, any record of these events or note of their personnel has escaped the TEC archive. Writing for *Independent Media*, however, Partridge (1986, p. 16) reflected on *Video Day* and its progeny with less optimism:

I was faced with the reality of how difficult it was to make video in Scotland for the individual artist. There were a number of film workshops grossly underfunded in comparison with southern cousins, some community groups who had the odd portapak, and some individual artists who had tried and failed to get access to the colleges of art in Edinburgh and Glasgow. There followed a number of meetings in Dundee to establish some sort of nationwide video association and local co-op which eventually failed.

To claim then, as some have, that the visual arts infrastructure of the early 1980s was bereft of action in the development of moving image in Scotland is not wholly true. Through the case of the TEC, however, a shift in engagement with the practice is evident, resulting from the organisation’s reinvention as an aspirant, more professional, more networked institution. Where the TEC had centred the moving image, shipped in (or out) as in *Unpacking 7 Films*, *About Time* and *Visual Facts*, a distance was felt from local communities. When it attempted to enhance infrastructure, as in the promising fora of *The Alternative Screen* and videomakers’ association, was unable to crystallise any lasting change. Where the TEC once offered a nexus for artists and organisers working with film and video, that authority was dispersed in the founding of the first truly artist-led spaces in Scotland, of which Glasgow’s Transmission (1983–) has become best known.

3.2.2 Miracles and their Dark Matter

The recent history of visual art in Scotland is dominated by the lore of Transmission. As Jackson (Brown, Jackson and Mulholland, 2018, p. 157) argues, ‘throughout the 1980s, it was Transmission that negotiated Glasgow’s place in the international art world, not Third

Eye.’ The TEC’s pursuit of touring initiatives left limited capacity, and no constitutional obligation, to represent Scottish artists at home or abroad (2018, p. 165). Transmission formed in part to satiate this desire within the artist community, borrowing its member-led organisational structure from the long-established New 57 Gallery. Not without contention, the reputation of Transmission—above any other Scottish organisation—has been leveraged as a blueprint for cultural organising in the post-industrial city. Jackson (2018, pp. 139–140), however, also warns of the tendency amongst historical accounts ‘to focus on a limited range of practices and institutions’ for which ‘the inevitable outcome is an incomplete and secessionist version of events focused on “pivotal” exhibitions.’ Whilst Transmission may be synonymous with a complex and porous network of actors and events, history is not represented by its institutional output alone. The gallery is often situated as the central node in the contested and retroactive *Glasgow Miracle*, a descriptor coined by Hans Ulrich Obrist in 1996. Writing decades later, Moira Jeffrey (2014a) identifies the phrase as constituting ‘the two most hated words in the Glasgow art world lexicon,’ in their misrepresentation of ‘the long, hard, unpaid labour behind cultural achievement.’ To enter into an analysis of Transmission and the artistic community which produced its legacy, without deference to myth-making, then, it is essential to first stake out this research’s position on the distinctions between historicisation and historical reality.

By the early 1990s, a group of Glasgow-based artists, later dubbed the *Scotia Nostra* by Douglas Gordon in his 1996 Turner Prize acceptance speech and loosely contemporary with the Young British Artists generation, were reaping certain international critical and commercial success (Harding, 2001).⁵¹ This neo-conceptual cohort comprised many of the earliest graduates of the Environmental Art undergraduate pathway established by artist David Harding in 1985 at The Glasgow School of Art. Environmental Art offered the first non-medium-specific teaching at GSA, founded upon the philosophy that ‘context is half the work,’ a maxim borrowed from Barbara Steveni’s Artist Placement Group (Harding, 2002). Artist Sam Ainsley (2021), who taught alongside Harding, remembers that in the beginning their students ‘mostly came from the west of Scotland, mostly working-class kids, who were supported financially, they got grants, they got fees paid. It was a golden era of free education.’ Following the Robbins Report (1963), higher education in Britain was made effectively free; the state paid tuition fees and offered generous maintenance grants to many.

⁵¹ Gordon having appropriated the term from an earlier network of Scottish painters who had occupied senior roles in art schools across England in the 1960s, see Harding (2001).

After 1989 these grants were gradually phased out, replaced by repayable loans (Anderson, 2016). Benefitting from this policy environment, the graduates who comprised this neo-conceptual group could include Christine Borland, Roderick Buchanan, Nathan Coley, Jacqueline Donachie, Douglas Gordon and Ross Sinclair amongst others (Ainsley, 2021). Their convergence with the global art market in the early 1990s—a first in Scotland—introduced a new agent to the field of historiography whose interests in the promotion of certain narratives were at least partly financial.

Gregory Sholette (2010, p. 125) describes the post-Thatcher period for artists as ‘the age of neoliberal enterprise culture,’ characterised by a global trend in the ‘tremendous lowering of expectations [...] and a cooling down of efforts at collective action.’ The emulation of this marketised worldview is a critique convincingly drawn at the YBA by cultural theorist Angela McRobbie (1998), amongst others. Alongside ‘being crypto-Thatcherite,’ not least in their association with Charles Saatchi, ‘whose advertising campaigns [...] were instrumental in helping Thatcher remain in power,’ Dan Fox (2013) makes the charge that their art was ‘blithely apolitical.’ To better situate artistic production within its social context, the extent to which analogous behaviour was too inculcated amongst their Scottish counterparts, being parallel to the YBA in many respects, warrants due attention.⁵² One key distinction perhaps lay in Glasgow artists’ political opposition to Thatcherism. Ainsley (2021) remembers her students taking an active stance:

It was a very political time because of the Poll Tax [1989–1993], Margaret Thatcher, a lot of punk still about. [...] The students were making a lot of work with quite a political edge to it. [...] There was a *strong* sense of being part of a community, a group who shared ideals.

Conceding that ‘although several commentators have linked the DIY movement with the idea of the “self-made man,”’ Sarah Lowndes (2010, p. 95) argues that, in Glasgow, ‘the collective, profit-sharing framework of many of the enterprises in the city was decidedly at odds with Thatcher’s ideology.’ Even into the mid-1990s, as artists like Gordon became established international figures, individuals allege that a sense of anti-competitive solidarity endured. Half of artist duo Smith/Stewart, Stephanie Smith moved to Glasgow in 1994 and remembers that,

⁵² In their shared ‘neo-conceptual’ form of practice, in their self-organising approach and in their occupation of ex-industrial building as exhibitions sites. Douglas Gordon and Christine Borland have often been included in accounts of both groups.

The whole *Glasgow Miracle* thing was supposedly going on—but actually it was down to the generosity of individuals. [...] For example, we met Christine van Assche, the video curator from the Pompidou because she was over to see Douglas [Gordon] and he'd pointed her, really generously, at fellow artists who were working with video, and said, 'go and see them while you're here.'

Upon that interaction, Smith/Stewart were included in *X/Y: Jeunes artistes, Nouveaux médias* (Centre Pompidou, 1995). Similar testimonies abound, though this collegial scene is somehow not represented amongst certain historiography.

In generalist surveys like Murdo Macdonald's *Scottish Art* only Gordon and Borland receive mention (2000, p. 206) whilst Lachlan Goudie's recent *The Story of Scottish Art* perpetuates the same, marginally extending the honour by discussing Jim Lambie (2020, p. 206). In such accounts, narrative separated from historical reality has uplifted certain figures above others, forming a hagiography of individuals—not collectives—backed by commercial forces. Those who found representation in what Jackson waggishly called 'pivotal' exhibitions have been memorialised ahead of countless others—emergent before, alongside and after the Miracle—but who were arguably more invested in the invisibilised business of organising, educating and otherwise building vital infrastructure. The Glasgow Miracle, I argue, perpetuates a wilful distortion of circumstance that can be effectively articulated through Sholette's theorising of *creative dark matter*. He writes:

Like its astronomical cousin, *creative dark matter* also makes up the bulk of the artistic activity produced in our post-industrial society. However, this type of dark matter is invisible primarily to those who lay claim to the management and interpretation of culture—the critics, art historians, collectors, dealers, museums, curators, and arts administrators. It includes makeshift, amateur, informal, unofficial, autonomous, activist, non-institutional, self-organized practices—all work made and circulated in the shadows of the formal art world, some of which might be said to emulate cultural dark matter by rejecting art world demands of visibility, and much of which has no choice but to be invisible. (2010, p. 1)

For each narrative made permissible by the official artworld, an exponentially greater number go underacknowledged. Moreover, this process of marginalisation enacts a pattern of social reproduction sanctioned by neoliberalism writ large, to the acute detriment of non-white, non-male, working-class or queer accounts. The history I have assembled heretofore has largely benefitted from a unilateral under-acknowledgement that grants relative immunity from historiographic distortion; it has mostly escaped mythology. After the early 1990s, the quiet privilege of anonymity is conceded amid the popularisation of moving image media within institutional programming and art criticism. I invoke Sholette's theory of creative dark

matter here, ahead of its full manifestation, to frame my approach to the activities of the mid- and late 1980s as more than preparatory experiments, as inextricable from the storied successes later deemed *miraculous*.

3.2.3 Film and video in Scotland's art schools

Creative dark matter instructs us to reconsider visibility as the denouement of many more untold labours. The recovery of art-historical narratives, I contend, has additionally been skewed by the overrepresentation of exhibitions amongst institutional and journalistic archives in that, of all artworld procedures, these most easily conform to practices of record-keeping and critical appraisal. In effect, overwrought focus on exhibitions de-emphasises the pivotal role of activities relating to education and production which, by nature, are less public-facing and therefore leave fewer records. For the moving image in Scotland after the mid-1980s, I argue, the role of art schools is formative though little acknowledged. The following overview considers the provision of training and resources through the establishing years of the School of Television and Electronic Imaging (STEI) and the Television Workshop at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and the Environmental Art pathway at GSA.⁵³ From their inception, these two departments figure as enduring fixtures within moving image practice, arguably more so than their counterparts in other disciplines. As David Hall (1989, p. 17) explains:

A video artist, unlike a painter, cannot function without considerable support. [...] Hence the college department that actively encourages video work is invaluable as a cultural and production context for students and artists alike. In this case, *education* is not only intended as a brief initiation period preliminary to *coming out into the real world*, but is more an ongoing interface.

In January 1984, Stephen Partridge relocated from London to Dundee to take on a lectureship at the newly established STEI. Despite a string of successful exhibitions in the 1970s, he noticed that 'video never took off in Scotland in the way that it did across the rest of Britain and Europe' (1987, p. 25). Writing for *Alba*, he postulated:

Perhaps this is an identification of the powerful role that art colleges play within the direction of art development in the country as a whole. There were no practicing artists working in video and employed neither full or part-time in any of the four Scottish art schools. (1987, p. 25)

⁵³ Known as Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design (DJCAD) after 1996.

Although a partial view, positioning his endeavours at the centre of a paradigm shift, Partridge justly notes that without appropriate educational infrastructure, a culture of videomaking—or indeed filmmaking—could never be substantially cultivated. Invoking the all-too-familiar causality dilemma of appetite and provision, he establishes the stalemate into which the STEI intervened.

The school began as a meagre resource of ‘four ageing VHS portapak and a U-Matic edit suite cramped into one tiny room,’ fast updated as a serviceable facility of ‘two edit suites, two U-Matic ENG kits, a properly equipped workshop, new VHS portapak’ (Partridge, 1986, p. 16). By 1986, this expanded to encompass:

Five edit suites, from 3 machine high-band with Convergence computer assisted time code editing and twin DVE, through a second three-machine lo-band edit suite, a single frame animatics suite with time code Paltrex controller and Neilson Hordell rostrum, a VHS off-line edit suite with ‘burnt-in’ time code capability, and various computer graphics installations soon to be augmented with Paintbox. (Partridge, 1986, p. 16)

For nearly a decade, DJCA’s video production facilities remained unrivalled amongst Scottish art schools. Mulholland (2009, p. 23) credits DJCA alone as having ‘pioneered the advanced use of this expensive technology.’

The launch of GSA’s Environmental Art pathway in 1985 heralded no equivalent resource in Glasgow. Rather, through a progressive philosophy, Harding and Ainsley promoted an interdisciplinary comprehension of film and video media as equal in significance to other media. Whilst they provided an ideas-based training, Ainsley (2021) remarks that for artists working with video DJCA was ‘famous’ for its postgraduate programme and what it offered in terms of ‘access to equipment and technical help.’ They instead recruited the GFVW to deliver a two-week film and video introduction to students and teaching was supplemented by regular screenings for students, spanning classic Hollywood cinema to work by experimental filmmakers like Norman McLaren and Maya Deren; on one occasion, Ainsley remembers showing Nagisa Ōshima’s pornographic art film *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976), in which ‘this woman cuts off a man's penis’ and ‘Douglas Gordon went green and keeled over’ (Ainsley, 2021). Although the moving image was embedded within a holistic visual arts education, the department’s capacity to facilitate film- and videomaking deferred to a policy of self-directed learning for students ‘by borrowing equipment from [GFVW], basically teaching themselves and us critiquing it,’ says Ainsley (2021).

At DJCA, meanwhile, these emphases were arguably reversed: technical training prioritised, conceptual rationale placing second. Without precedence or a community of practice around it, however, DJCA at first seemed like an outlier. Writing in 1987, Malcolm Dickson explained that, despite being ‘light years ahead,’

Because Scottish art schools have not included video or other extended practices into their curricula until very recently [...] there is no critical or practical assistance to the medium, which mean that the video department at DJCA might be perceived as being a finishing school for English students already well-versed in the technology.
(Editor’s Notes in Robertson, 1987, p. 9)

By 1986, Partridge, joined by Colin McLeod, had established the postgraduate diploma in Electronic Imaging and the Council for National Academic Awards had ratified a BA (Hons) in Time Based Media, allowing undergraduates to major in video, performance and installation (Partridge, 1986, p. 16). Certainly, a number of the diploma’s first cohort of twelve arrived with a pedigree: Doug Aubrey and Alan Robertson having studied under David Hall at Maidstone College of Art—where Partridge had himself earlier trained. In some ways, the emerging video community in Dundee can be seen as an outpost to the form of practice represented by London Video Arts, of which Partridge was a founding member, in that it propagated work with formalist sympathies, having an emphasis on technology and plugging into a UK-wide video festival circuit which mostly bypassed the Scottish context.⁵⁴ Partridge refutes that there ever was a unified ideological approach or ‘Dundee school of thought’ whilst acknowledging that ‘undoubtedly technology does have an influence’ (Partridge, Shemilt and Lockhart, 2007, p. 5). He also recalls that they ‘had better facilities than London Video Arts did for a long time’ (2007, p. 5). Regardless of theoretical underpinnings, DJCA’s early acquisition of equipment which could facilitate complex layering and multi-screen editing certainly encouraged a particular kind of experimentation. Perhaps more than the instruction offered at the STEI, this resource would come to influence a generation of video work in Scotland.

That June, the Television Workshop was also established as a commercial production arm of the school with the aim of supporting video in the cultural sector (Partridge, 1987, p. 27). Although access to facilities for external parties had earlier been available on an *ad hoc* basis, the Television Workshop formalised this service, offering equipment hire and production

⁵⁴ Which included the National Festival of Independent Video, Bracknell (1981–1988), the National Review of Live Art, various locations (1979–2010) and Video Positive, Liverpool (1989–2000).

support. Individuals could join with sympathetic hire rates determined by levels of project funding and reductions available during academic down-time (*The Television Workshop*, 1990). For three artists—Alan Robertson, Ian Haddow and Malcolm Dickson—access was supported by the Scottish Arts Council in the workshop’s first year through a Visual Arts Video Bursary of £1,000.⁵⁵ Though modest, these awards ostensibly represent the first public subsidy in Scotland specifically dedicated to artists’ use of moving image media. By 1990, the Television Workshop could boast an impressive list of service users including artists John Latham, Jeff Keen, Raul Rodriguez, Daniel Reeves, and organisations such as BBC Scotland, Film and Video Umbrella, Moviola, the National Film Board of Canada alongside theatres, galleries and universities across Scotland (*The Television Workshop*, 1990).

In step with technological developments, the facilities at DJCA were to be again updated in 1991 with the introduction of ‘a new Component Betacam SP Edit Suite; a new Graphics area; three composite three-machine Suites handling Hi and Lo Band U-Matic and Hi 8mm; and four offline suites,’ located within a newly refurbished, purpose-built studio environment (*The Television Workshop*, 1990). The campaign of technological progress, however, ultimately cannibalised the physical workshop as digital editing processes became increasingly sophisticated, financially accessible and eventually mobile. Partridge (2019, pp. 288–289) remembers that,

By about 1996, it was clear to me that we did not need the Electronic Imaging postgraduate diploma anymore because it had all been embedded into the undergraduate courses, along with the other traditional media. The technology had been transformed to the extent that what had once required a state-of-the-art £400,000 editing suite could now be done on a Mac.

Mulholland (2009, p. 23) notes that this democratisation and dispersal effectively broke DJCA’s ‘monopoly on art-related expertise.’

In 1992, Ainsley and artist John Shankie were also awarded a seed grant of £30,000 from the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation which would help equip and establish a workshop at GSA (Ainsley, 2021). Under the direction of recent graduate Paul Maguire (1992–1994), working with Ainsley and artist Charles Sandison, the Electronic Media Studio (EMS) was founded with equipment including a Macintosh Quadra 950 installed with video graphics, modelling and animation software MacroMind Director, Three-D and MacroModel; TruVision NuVista

⁵⁵ A subsequent round of bursaries was awarded to Gwyneth Leech, Isabella Emslie and James Mavor.

video card; VLAN deck control; Panasonic SVHS camera and video deck; and a 4-track recorder and microphone (Maguire, 2021). This studio grew through further investment year upon year, becoming a facility that, for Ainsley (2021), ‘made a huge difference to students’ ability to make their own work.’ Where once ‘at least half of the artists coming to Dundee were from Glasgow’ (Partridge, Shemilt and Lockhart, 2007, p. 5), the belated development of in-house resources at GSA would undermine this pipeline, offering a further challenge to the once singular reputation of DJCA’s facilities.

The development of training and resource in film and video production within Scottish art schools, particularly before digitisation liberated such practices from the specialist workshop environment, is inextricable from exhibition-making activities of graduates in the same field. The communities, critical context and equipment resources established at DJCA and GSA, as I now consider, supply the uptake of such media within the programming of Transmission. Thereafter, the workshops continued throughout the decade most associated with the Glasgow Miracle to answer increasing demand for support. The impact of this often-invisible work in underwriting the dominant historical narrative is perhaps no better encapsulated than through the case of Gordon’s watershed installation, *24 Hour Psycho* (1993). Maguire (2021) remembers working closely with Gordon through technical iterations of the video:

We tried various hugely labour-intensive ways of time-stretching the original film and finally chanced across the idea that by simply playing the original film and setting the jog shuttle of the Panasonic video deck to a specific setting it came to 24 hours. He arranged for exactly the same deck to be used in the installation.

In this way, we find traces of the EMS in what is arguably the signature work of a generation.

3.3 Film, video and performance at Transmission, 1983–1986

Counter to general accounts, the first years of Transmission are not synonymous with the would-be *Scotia Nostra* set nor its neo-conceptual brand of an internationalist, post-media practice. From a first premises in Chisholm Street provided rent free by the Glasgow District Council, the programme of its founding committee was instead preoccupied with the political and figurative work of contemporary painters (McNab, 1983, p. 25). Early exhibitions included the issue-based groups shows *Urban Life* (1983), *Construction Painting* (1984), *Blunt Image* (1984), *Winning Hearts and Minds* (1984), featuring a group of figurative painters from The Glasgow School of Art most often associated with New Image painting.⁵⁶ Though based in Glasgow, the gallery served an expressly nationwide membership, initially comprising around thirty-five artists dubbed the ‘Committee for Visual Arts’ from which the programme’s organisers and participants were drawn (McNab, 1983, p. 25). After only a year, in December 1984, Transmission’s basement suffered flooding which forced the gallery into a long period of closure. Malcolm Dickson (2020) remembers this effecting the morale of the first organising committee and prompting a restructure:

There was a general meeting called and the committee then said something to the effect of ‘look, we’re going to fold unless other people come forward and run the show.’ So, myself, Carol Rhodes, Gordon Muir and Graham Johnstone were the people who were involved at that point.

Under the leadership of this second committee (c.1985–1987), soon joined by Billy Clark amongst others, the political agenda of the gallery endured though its aesthetic remit was expanded to incorporate the time-based practices of performance, film and video; ‘in retrospect,’ Dickson (2020) recalls, ‘all of that happened quite quickly.’

On 17 August 1985, Transmission presented two collaborative films by filmmaker Ken McMullen and artist Stuart Brisley, *Arbeit Macht Frei* (1973) and *Being and Doing* (1984) at the Third Eye Centre’s studio theatre (McLauchlan and Stephenson, 2001, p. 110).

Concerned with the performing body’s inculcation of genocidal violence and folk ritual respectively, these films and Transmission’s screening thereof staked a confident position in dealing with difficult political subjects unaverted. A participant in *Locations Edinburgh*, Brisley had a longstanding reputation in Scotland, revived here for a new generation.

Dickson (2020) remembers that he was ‘quite taken by the collective structure of

⁵⁶ Popularly labelled the *New Glasgow Boys*, this grouping is contested by its subjects and amongst scholarship but commonly refers to artists Steven Campbell, Ken Currie, Peter Howson and Adrian Wiszniewski,

Transmission. [...] I guess he got the impression that there were these young, working-class intelligentsia folks doing this thing that he wanted to be involved in.' The screening marked the beginning of a productive relationship between the two, manifesting a two-day durational performance the following year, *Red Army II* (Transmission, 11–13 August 1986).⁵⁷ In addition to the city-wide collaborations they began cultivating, the committee's increasing support of time-based practices situated the organisation within a growing network of peers across the UK, namely Projects UK (1983–1992), Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and *Performance* magazine (1979–1992), a 'main portal,' Dickson (2020) says, for what was happening in time-based media. These connections were formative; Dickson (2020), for instance, recalls first meeting Brisley through Projects UK. Concurrent with Doug Aubrey's joining of the committee, these networks provided a critical context for Transmission's first foray into film and video exhibition proper: *EventSpace*.

3.3.1 *Glasgow Events Space* (1986) and *EventSpace 2* (1986)

Glasgow Events Space (3–28 February 1986), retroactively known as *EventSpace 1*, the first of three such events, purported to follow on from the landmark exhibition *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* at the TEC, exactly one decade earlier (Dickson, 1986a, p. 28). In many ways a continuity was forged: the former's co-curator Tom McGrath provided the opening's entertainment via poetry recital whilst video contributions from Stephen Partridge (*Interrun*, 1986) and David Hall (*Phased Time*, 1974) featured prominently. In other ways, *Glasgow Events Space* departed confidently from the stricture of 1970s formalism.

Established artists Kevin Atherton (*Stand Up Television (Death in Glasgow)*, 1986), Stephen Littman (*Overseen, Overheard, Overlooked*, 1986) and Zoë Redman (*She, Her, I*, 1986; *Lost Place*, 1985) were presented side-by-side with students of the newly established School of Television and Electronic Imaging, including Aubrey and Alan Robertson, collaborating as Pictorial Heroes (*Faction>Fragments>Divisions*, 1986), Sandra Christie (*Human Landscape*, n.d.) and Joj Goslan/Cammy Galt (*Please Unite Us*, n.d.; *Raison d'Etre*, n.d.). Further contributors included Duncan's Duo, Ian Haddow, Tony Judge, Alister McDonald, Jane Rigby and Michael O'Pray who presented a curated programme of films by Derek Jarman amongst others (Dale, 1986; Dickson, 1986a, p. 29; Partridge, 1987, p. 27).

⁵⁷ *Red Army II* coincided with a staging of Brisley's long-term project *The Georgiana Collection* (1979–1986) at the TEC (10 August – 6 September 1986), a faux-institutional collection of documentation and objects related to the street where he lived (Dickson, 1986c, p. 27).



Figure 32: Transmission (1986) *Glasgow Events Space*. [Poster] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive. PH070.

In Gallery One, the blacked-out space featured a rotating selection of film and video installations in the daytime and a programme of live events in the evening. In Gallery Two, the exhibition comprised a sixteen-monitor video wall variously hosting satellite broadcasts, multichannel works by Littman, Pictorial Heroes and Partridge, and a feed of the activities in Gallery One—reported in one article as the ‘first time that the video wall has been used for artistic purposes in Scotland’ (Dale, 1986). Also featured was a library of single-screen videotapes, drawn from open submission, a package of independent Australian video and the catalogue of London Video Arts. Reporting in *Performance*, Dickson (1986a, p. 28) described the environment: ‘usually host to static exhibitions of painting, [Transmission] was transformed into an Aladdin’s Cave: stacks of video monitors lined walls, a computer sat churning out its observations, wires were everywhere, artists’ video cassettes littered the place.’



Figure 33: Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art Video Production Board (1986) *Glasgow Events Space*. [3/4" U-Matic videotape, colour] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

The packed programme, physically matched by the overstuffed gallery, testifies to the expansive network developed by its organisers. Support was solicited in different ways: the Scottish Arts Council provided additional funding whilst the video technology rentals company Viewplan PLC reportedly ‘rang out of the blue and offered the use of U-Matic cameras and equipment’ (Caldwell, 1986, p. 10). The videowall was provided by television rental company DER and to the exhibition’s video library, free tapes were donated by Doublevision, the music video label of post-punk band Cabaret Voltaire; IKON, the video arm of Manchester-based label Factory Records; and Projects UK (Caldwell, 1986, p. 10). Dickson (2020) stresses that the link with DJCA, through the contacts of Partridge and Aubrey especially, had been critical in facilitating many of these connections.

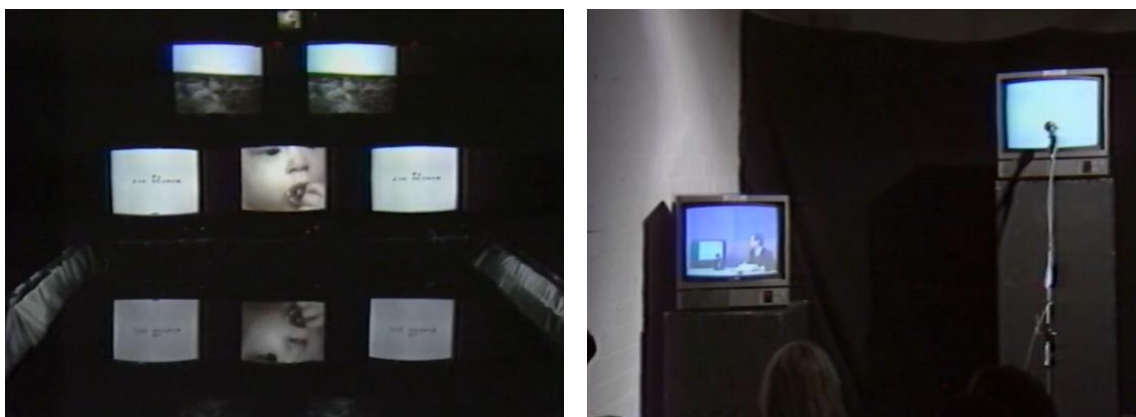


Figure 34: Documentation of (l) Redman, Z. (1986) *She, Her, I*. and (r) Atherton, K. (1986) *Stand Up Television (Death in Glasgow)* in Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art Video Production Board (1986) *Glasgow Events Space*. [3/4" U-Matic videotape, colour] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

The DJCA community also offered a means of extending the work of *Glasgow Events Space* further afield. DJCA-SAC Visual Arts Video Bursary recipient Ian Haddow selected eight videotapes from participants to form a touring package dubbed *Made in Scotland* (Partridge, 1986, p. 16).⁵⁸ Throughout 1986, the package toured North American venues with the support of the British Council not least including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis. Presented as a ‘commentary on art, politics, and the mass media,’ *Made in Scotland* occupied MoMA’s ground-floor Video Gallery for a month (20 March – 22 April 1986), coordinated by the pioneering curator Barbara London (Museum of Modern Art, 1986). The selection featured Haddow’s *Points of View* (1985), wherein one actor plays four characters, each responding differently to threats upon their lifestyle, and *Ken Noo’s Guide Tae Glesca Cookery* (1985), one of the comic vignettes from McGrath and Partridge’s *Two Reelers* ensemble: ‘a satire of television cooking shows’ which ‘offers a working class host with upper class aspirations and a reference to Claude Levi-Strauss’ The Raw and the Cooked’ (Museum of Modern Art, 1986). The success of *Made in Scotland* precipitated a sequel curated by Partridge and Christopher Rowland, *Made in Scotland II* (1989), and set a precedence for several videotape distribution packages produced in the 1990s.

Despite the international offshoots of its programme, *Glasgow Events Space* joined the chorus of complaint from earlier video-focused exhibitions in that it failed to attract

⁵⁸ Tony Judge, *Sardonic Hearts, Euphoric Voices*, 1986; Pictorial Heroes, *Faction>Tottenham Version*, 1986; Stephen Partridge, *One Thousand and One Boys’ Games*, 1984; Alister McDonald, *Video Dialectic*, 1986; Ian Haddow, *Points of View*, 1985; Joj Goslan and Cammy Galt, *Autogenous Monomania*, 1985; Tom McGrath and Stephen Partridge, *Ken Noo’s Guide Tae Glesca Cookery*, 1985; and, Richard Gardner, *Words to that Effect*, 1985.

engagement from the local art-critical establishment. It is, for instance, conspicuously absent from the papers of Cordelia Oliver and Clare Henry—the latter of whom having otherwise consistently covered Transmission’s painting-based exhibitions. Julia Knight (1996b, p. 2) notes that although funding and exhibition conditions improved for video art in the UK in the mid-1980s, there ‘remained a stubborn dearth of critical writing.’ Half-jokingly, Dickson (1986a, p. 28) explained that ‘one particular Glasgow newspaper, in fact the only one which reviews shows, did not send a critic to review the event because they did not know whether to send an art critic, film critic or TV critic.’ A key distinction between *Glasgow Events Space* and the exhibitions of the 1970s, however, lay in the committee’s ability to circumvent traditional media institutions, benefitting instead from new communications infrastructure born of technological developments. Throughout the month, for example, exhibition trailers were broadcast via Clyde Cable Vision, a short-lived cable network founded the previous year. A short documentary feature was also produced and distributed by the DJCA Video Production Board in association with MFX.⁵⁹ In this, Partridge opines that ‘it’s a young gallery, it’s a young committee, I think it’s just right. It has a taste [...] of Soho in New York maybe, of ten years ago. It’s a bit rough and ready but there’s an excitement around here’ (Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art Video Production Board, 1986). In these ways, *Glasgow Events Space* sought to generate its own critical context, articulating a narrative for itself without deference to established channels.⁶⁰

Perhaps the most significant player in this artist-led critical ecology was *Variant* (1984–1985; 1987–1994; 1996–2012). Though the magazine was effectively dormant during *Glasgow Events Space*, following a relaunch the following year, *Variant* became a strong advocate for the activities of EventSpace and artists’ adoption of film and video in general, not least owing to Dickson’s involvement in editing the publication. As Craig Richardson (2011, p. 148) has argued, ‘separating the histories of Transmission Gallery, *Variant* magazine and the newly launched EventSpace at this time is a pointless exercise; each claimed a separately considered mission, which was a wise financial strategy, but their synergies were evident.’ More than simply sharing personnel, however, a symbiotic relationship was, for a time, built into the agenda of the magazine: upon *Variant*’s relaunch in autumn 1987, one of its four aims was to

⁵⁹ MFX was the video production company of Doug Aubrey, Richard Gardner and Alan Robertson.

⁶⁰ Dickson later curated *Lost and Found* (Street Level Photoworks, 16 April – 30 May 2010), which restaged many of the installations from *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* and *Glasgow Events Space* by artists Kevin Atherton, Stephen Littman, Pictorial Heroes, Zoë Redman, Stephen Partridge and Tony Sinden, further contributing to the critical and historical positioning of these exhibitions.

‘serve as a platform for EventSpace, an organisation aimed at promoting time-based media and experimental approaches’ (‘Front matter,’ 1987, p. 3). To this end, Robertson (1987, p. 6) contributed an article, ‘101 Things To Do With Time,’ which surveyed time-based work in Scotland to date, centring the ‘foolhardy but successful’ *Glasgow Events Space* as something of a big bang moment.

Bemusement from mainstream media wasn’t the only hostility that Transmission’s new direction encountered. In their departure from the pictorial tradition, organisers also met resistance from the membership. Richardson (2011, p. 138) describes how some felt that the programme of exhibitions ‘consciously promoted obscurity and insularity amidst a sea of long-awaited commercial success and accessible forms as presented by *New Image: Glasgow* [TEC, 1985].’ *New Image: Glasgow* had been an ossifying exhibition for a brand of painterly social realism propagated by Ken Currie and Peter Howson, developing upon the groundwork of earlier Transmission exhibitions like *Winning Hearts and Minds*. That Transmission had ceased tending to this kind of practice became a point of contention. Committee member Billy Clark (quoted in Lowndes, 2010, p. 80) remembers that Currie sent a letter resigning ‘because the gallery was “bourgeois”’ adding that ‘he was giving up painting to use film because Lenin had said that film was the greatest tool of the worker.’ Part of the gallery’s inaugural membership body, the Committee for Visual Arts, Currie had been a selector for its first exhibition *Urban Life* (McNab, 1983, p. 25). Wrapped in some contradiction, his complaint suggests a further ideological conflict between his understanding of film as a political apparatus—manifest through his collaboration on Cranhill Films’ *Glasgow 1984* (1984) and *Clyde Film* (1985)—and the artistic film and video media practices which Transmission advocated for.⁶¹ In drawing these critiques, Transmission’s new direction exposed something of the insatiable nature of the membership it constitutionally represented. The organising committee’s enduring commitment to time-based media thereafter might also signal a break from the initial curatorial strategy for the space, as a pipeline between members and exhibitions, and the outwardly networked approach of EventSpace.

Ever industrious, Transmission were quick to prepare a second iteration: *EventSpace 2* (4–25 October 1986). Building on the foundation of its predecessor which had mostly reflected the expanded network of its organisers, this second exhibition was more focused around

⁶¹ In the decade which followed, Currie would become a recurrent and vocal critic of neo-conceptual practices in Glasgow, claiming that any form of abstraction was complicit in deprioritising class struggle. See his criticism of *Trust* (Tramway, 1995), relayed by Clare Henry for *The Herald*, 13 & 15 May 1995.

particular thematic enquiries. These included *Video Art in the Federal Republic of Germany*, a touring package of twenty-two works presented with the Goethe-Institut Glasgow (4 October); *Super 8, A Storm of Images: Recent Scottish Films* (10 October); *A Camera of One's Own: New Films by Women* (11 October); performances by Richard Layzell (17 October) and Charlie Hooker (25 October); and videos by Partridge, Pictorial Heroes and Chris Rowlands (25 October) (McLauchlan and Stephenson, 2001, p. 111).

With a heavier emphasis on live art and performance, *EventSpace 2* was less expressly concerned with synthesising recent artistic developments in film and video. Indeed, some of its moving image programming was met with outright derision. Robertson (1987, p. 7) described *Video Art in the Federal Republic of Germany* as 'so awful that no one could bear watching for long.' Responding to that article, Dickson (Editor's Notes in Robertson, 1987, p. 9), as one of the organisers, even admits that it was an erratic package, 'with bad tape copies, lack of coherence between works, and most of the tapes coming from artists who were not German'—though he argues contributions from Marcel Odenbach, Ulrike Rosenbach and Berlin-based 'post-punk video/film unit' Gruppe Notorsche Reflexe saved it from 'ending up in Transmission's dustbin.' Also including revered names like Ulay and Marina Abramovic, Klaus vom Bruch and video pioneer Nam June Paik, the calibre of participants casts considerable speculation as to the poor quality of presentation at Transmission (Dickson, 1986b, p. 7).

Presented by filmmaker and critic Cordelia Swann and selected with Tina Keane, *A Camera of One's Own* was a two-part touring programme produced by Film and Video Umbrella. Featuring work by Sandra Lahire amongst others and citing the influence of forbearers like Maya Deren and Margaret Tait, it sought to represent a new generation of women filmmakers in the post-liberation era (Swann, 1986). Shown in Edinburgh's Filmhouse earlier that year and meeting some criticism therein for being too 'art college and London biased,' the Transmission screening, Swann (1986) reported, was enjoyed by an audience of forty-five:

We received a very positive response from all the audience despite the screen being made out of a sheet. It was the gallery's first 16mm screening, as a result we did all the projection as well as explaining the necessity for splicers, rewinds and take up spools.

Also signalling something of the gallery's DIY approach, without dedicated funding, *EventSpace 2*, like its predecessor, relied on substantial goodwill and community involvement. The staging of Hooker's choreographed performance, *White-Lining* (1986), for

instance, enlisted volunteers from the student cohort of the Environmental Art pathway at GSA. Amongst five performers ‘beating sticks’ and ‘rotating ghetto blasters suspended by elastic from the ceiling’ (Robertson, 1987, p. 7) were artists Douglas Gordon and Craig Richardson—both of whom would later join the Transmission committee—Andrew Lockhart and John Oliver (Dickson, 2008a, p.64). Dickson (2020) remembers this as a rare moment of convergence:

That was a nice bringing together of those two centres of education where a lot of innovation was coming from. [...] There was a three-headed thing that was happening, [...] it was coming from those three places: Transmission, Environmental Art and from Dundee.

Outside of EventSpace, exchange between the bicoastal student communities of Glasgow and Dundee had been surprisingly limited. I asked Sam Ainsley (2021) whether there was a sense of dialogue between schools, to which she replied ‘not at all and to this day I’m not sure why.’ In this way, *EventSpace 2* provided something of a bridge. Through its recruitment of the Environmental Art students in particular—building upon interests piqued by *Red Army II*—it also offered a clue to the changing personnel who would steer Transmission after 1987.

3.4 Video's critical mass, 1986–1989

The first two EventSpace programmes offer a local portent of wider ontological shifts in the perception of moving image practices underway by the late 1980s. As the American artist and curator Jason Simon (King and Simon, 2014) has suggested, 1989 represents ‘the year that film and video began to share screens, or, more precisely, venues.’ Elsewhere, Stephen Partridge (2006, p. 180), Erika Balsom (2013b, p. 13), Chris Meigh-Andrews (2006, p. 89) and Chrissie Iles (2003, p. 130) have each described the years that follow as a period of *convergence* or *merging*, whereupon film and video were remediated as data-based binary code and popularly exhibited as large-scale digital projections. Simon (King and Simon, 2014) also declares this juncture ‘the beginning of the end of a self-contained media-art culture more or less independent of the art market.’ In full motion by the early 1990s, this convergence, I add, was twofold: firstly, it flattened the distinction between film and video via the technological possibility of emancipation from their material bases; secondly, it brought this moving image work into closer proximity with traditional artistic media, cohabiting, with increasing regularity, in exhibition schedules and funding streams. Between 1986 and 1989, a handful of interrelated activities in Scotland attest to these shifts, inaugurating a slow but irrevocable process of integration into the art establishment. This transformation is catalysed by growing technological accessibility worldwide and, in Scotland specifically, developments in educational resource—earlier summarised—and permissive cultural policy.

Since 1982, the Scottish Film Production Fund had offered subsidy to limited forms of experimental moving image production, supporting work by Lesley Keen, Tom McGrath and Stephen Partridge, Cranhill Films, and Margaret Tait. The Fund’s emphasis on television broadcast and theatrical exhibition, however, was not by any design suited to the expanding register of contexts for the moving image, to the most acute exclusion of gallery-based video. The introduction of the Scottish Arts Council’s first Visual Arts Video Bursary in 1986 offered a modest step towards such provision but, at three bursaries of £1,000, was hardly an instrument of infrastructural change. In 1987, a panel addressing the situation was convened, involving the SAC and featuring papers from Doug Aubrey, ‘On Practice,’ and Partridge, ‘On Production’ (‘Action/Time/Vision: news in time-based media,’ 1987, p. 5). The latter, Malcolm Dickson (1989b, p. 10) noted, ‘made several practical recommendations which could be applied to alleviate some of the problems thereby facilitating a more exciting and widespread practice.’ Despite the support of SAC officers Robert Livingston and Lindsay

Gordon—secretary to the first SAC Film Committee in 1979—Dickson (Byrne and Dickson, 1998, p. 19), looking back, described how ‘many agonising moments were spent trying to justify what this work was and was not.’ Not long after, though over fifteen years since artists’ film subsidy was first tabled, the SAC launched its New Projects Scheme (NPS) in 1988. A catchall fund earmarked for ‘time-based, site-specific or installation work, performance, artists-video [*sic*] and film’ (‘Scottish Arts Council: New Projects Scheme,’ 1988), the NPS signalled a major concession towards the validity of non-traditional modes of practice. In its first round, the scheme would subsidise initiatives including *Made in Scotland II* (1989), a videotape package of work by postgraduates students and artists made at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art (Dickson, 1989b, p. 10).⁶²



Figure 35: ‘Scottish Arts Council: New Projects Scheme’ (1988) *Performance*, (55), p. 3.

In the same few years, exhibitionary activity flourished. *Glasgow Events Space* had offered a virtually singular platform for film, video and time-based work but in the months following, partly through the network it had assembled, projects were spawned across the country and wider afield. Later in 1986, scouts from Audio-Visueel Experimenteel (AVE) Festival, Arnhem, visited Glasgow as part of a campaign of Europe-wide research, procuring a package of videotapes from Transmission. The following year, Douglas Gordon and Craig Richardson, collaborating as Puberty Institution, were invited to Arnhem to perform *Forget Names and Faces* (1987) and Dickson showed his video installation *Arrival/Departure* (1987), produced at DJCA with his Visual Arts Video Bursary (Richardson, 2011, p. 140;

⁶² *Made in Scotland II* featured single-screen videos by Clio Barnard (*Dirt & Science*, 1988); Sandra Christie (*Venus*, 1988); Cavan Convery (*A Mere Simulation*, 1987); Richard Couzins (*Nicely Executed*, 1988); Lei Cox (*Lei Can Fly*, 1988; *The Parallel*, 1988; *Torso*, 1988); Malcolm Dickson (*Arrival/Departure*, 1988); Isabella Emslie (*Love and the Domestic Appliance*, 1988); David Kelly (*A Force to be Reckoned with*, 1988); Stephen Partridge (*Sentences 1, 2 & 3*, 1988; *Vide Voce (The Threes in the Four)*, 1986); Pictorial Heroes (*Sniper*, 1988); Liz Power (*A Cruise to the Universe*, 1988); and Christopher Rowland (*Tomato Martyr*, 1988; *Splat*, 1988).

Dickson, 2020). Making extensive use of the Television Workshop facilities, *Arrival/Departure* comprised dream-like footage taken from a moving window, witnessing trees and landscape pass, hyper-saturated, multi-layered and heavily distorted, over which a voiceover muses on themes of memory, amnesia and psychoanalysis—informed by Guy Debord’s theory of the *dérive* (Dickson, 1987). As a multi-screen installation, the work was also shown at the Third Eye Centre, later revised as a single-screen version and included in *Made in Scotland II* (Partridge, Shemilt and Lockhart, 2007, p. 7).

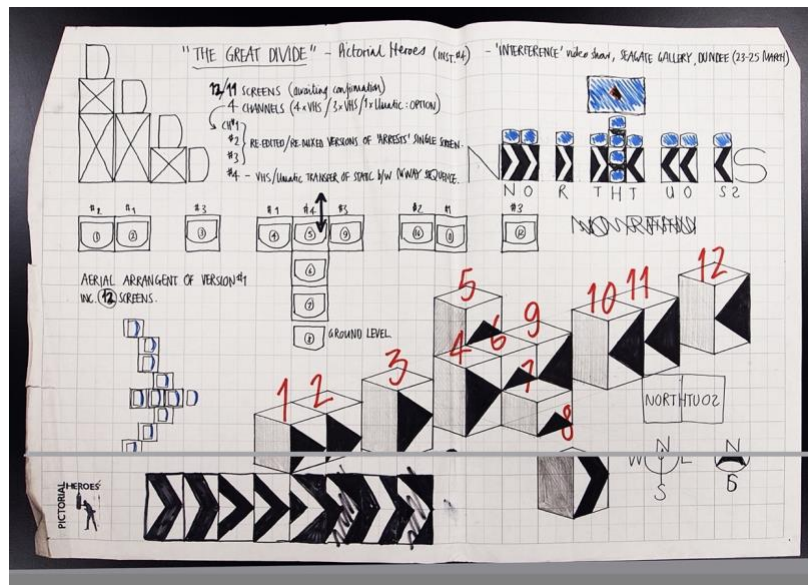


Figure 36: Pictorial Heroes (1987) *The Great Divide* at *Interference*, Seagate Gallery, 23–25 March. [Installation plan] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

In Dundee, the newly opened Seagate Gallery hosted *Interference* (14–31 March 1987), reportedly ‘the first video show outwith the central belt’ (Bain, 1987b, p. 9; Byrne and Dickson, 1998, p. 19). Coordinated by exhibitions organiser Bob McGilvray with four DJCA students, *Interference* featured a rotation of large-scale video installations by Sandra Christie (*Waking Dream*, n.d.), Stephen Littman (*Smile*, n.d.), Alister McDonald (*What Kind of Animal Are We?*, n.d.), Pictorial Heroes (*The Great Divide*, 1986–1988), Zoe Redman (*For You, Mrs Kelly*, 1986–1989) and Chris Rowland (*Shall We Dance?*, n.d.) (Robertson, 1987, p. 8), most of whom were involved in *Glasgow Events Space*. Best recorded in participating artist Alan Robertson’s (1987, p. 8) survey of time-based media, *Interference* ‘allowed the artists access to an excellent installation and performance space, and although the work was variable in effect, the audiences were large and appreciative.’ Though he also adds, ‘the only severe problem was the unnecessarily rapid turnover of works [...] it is unthinkable that a sculptor would be expected to install and dismantle their show in the space of three days.’

Revealing of the dominant though frustrating curatorial strategy of exhibiting film and video in a time-limited way, as had long been the default mode of display for time-based media in exhibitions, Robertson's critique hints at the increasing superfluity of the busy event-exhibition model which had underwritten such projects as *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* and *Glasgow Events Space*. Though perhaps originally ordained by the physical capacity of display apparatus, by the late 1980s technological developments had brought forward the possibility of permanent or at least longer-term, looping installations. In the same article, Robertson (1987, p. 9) also takes aim at the screening format adopted elsewhere in that, 'sadly it is often the case that it militates against any sympathetic appreciation of individual works to have them shown back-to-back in such manner.' What he advocates for instead is a parity between the display of video and traditional media, thereby bestowing an equity of cultural status. His complaint anticipates what I understand as a sense of splitting, wherein this event-exhibition hybrid is gradually replaced by two more consolidated forms: the gallery installation and the festival.



Figure 37: Documentation of Pictorial Heroes (1986) *Faction>All the King's Forces* at the *Society of Scottish Artists Annual Exhibition*, Royal Scottish Academy, November. [Photograph] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

As Pictorial Heroes, Robertson and Aubrey would themselves negotiate a new kind of interface between their political video work and the art establishment. Following *Glasgow Events Space*, the duo exhibited two further iterations of their *Faction* video installation series, *Faction>The Thin Blue Line* (1986) at the McLellan Galleries, Glasgow (9–21 June 1986) and *Faction>All the King's Forces* (1986) at the Society of Scottish Artists (SSA) Annual Exhibition at the Royal Scottish Academy (RSA), Edinburgh (November 1986). *The Thin Blue Line* offered a condensed ten-monitor, four-channel version of the original

Transmission installation, embedded within an environment of rubble and urban refuse. At the RSA, however, the project reached 'its fullest state' (Society of Scottish Artists, 1986). In one review, Alice Bain (1986, p. 29) described its sensorial effect: 'possibly the noisiest work ever to be included in a SSA Annual. [...] Twenty-four television sets and six video recorders pour out images and tribal sounds which attack and attract.' Through audio-visual cacophony, *All the King's Forces* hoped to stress 'the potential of society's "powerless" factions to react against the forces of dis(self)interest and manufactured concensus [*sic*]' (Society of Scottish Artists, 1986). In its activist agenda and abrasive form, the work knowingly broke with reverent convention. Between 1986 and 1989, sculptor George Wyllie served as president of the SSA and brought with him a playful sense of reform to the staid institution. Under this administration, *Pictorial Heroes*' installation seemingly represents the first time that film or video had featured in the annual exhibition. As Cordelia Oliver (1986) noted in another review,

FOR THE first time, maybe, in its 92-year history, the Society of Scottish Artists find its centre of gravity moving away from painting towards—well not sculpture in the purist sense, but certainly to three-dimensional exhibits. Youth too, is having its fling.

For both these installations, unlike prior iterations, certain resonance was produced in the juxtaposition of their rowdy, sprawling form and the context of their presentation within grand Neoclassical architectures—and the behavioural conventions such environments invoke. That is, disruption becomes instrumental to the very meaning of the work. As Robertson (1987, p. 6) explains,

One of the unique features about these pieces was their location within traditional art exhibitions, set loud and proud amongst the paint, canvas, wood and metal. It is thanks to the foresight and enthusiasm of George Wyllie that these works were not only shown, but also that they were not hived off into some obscure ghetto.

Through these works, *Pictorial Heroes* went some way to brokering the parity of display that they felt necessary to the legitimisation of video practice.

The following year, the position of video was further consolidated by *Pictorial Heroes*' successful participation in the Smith Biennial at The Smith Art Gallery and Museum, Stirling (17 September–18 October 1987). Only in its second edition, the Smith Biennial 1987 received 810 submissions of work across media from artists living in Scotland, from which only seventy-four were drawn for exhibition by selectors Sarah Kent, Keith Hartley and Rose Garrard (Bain, 1987a, p. 36). For Oliver (1987), of the two large open-submission

exhibitions in Scotland that year, ‘where the Smith Biennial has the edge on the Society of Scottish Artists is in its newness and newsworthiness.’ Robertson and Aubrey’s videotape *Sniper* (1987) took the second prize of £2,000, testifying to a growing appetite for the moving image amongst civic institutions born of a correlation between video, political art-making and notions of progress.⁶³ The work mixes elements of scratch video sampling with surveillance footage, overlaid with a scope reticle graphic to imply the viewpoint of a sniper, sifting through derelict environments and taking aim at the headquarters of Scottish Television in Glasgow (Pictorial Heroes, 1987). *Sniper*, one review explained, ‘targets the newscasters, amongst other voices in our world, “trying to contain the situation.” The message is clear. We live on red alert’ (Bain, 1987a, p. 36). In a revised second version, shorter and more explicit, the video also toured as part of *Made in Scotland II* (Partridge and Rowland, 1989, p. 30).



Figure 38: Pictorial Heroes (1987) *Sniper*. [Printed 3/4" U-Matic videotape still] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

As Pictorial Heroes were confronting the perceived establishment with their guerrilla video art, EventSpace was also undertaking a renegotiation of how and where time-based media might interface with its audience. Following *EventSpace 2* and coincident with their departure from the Transmission committee, the organising trio of Dickson, Aubrey and Robertson, joined by Ken Gill—a founder member of Projects UK who had moved to Glasgow, taking on a coordinator role at the Glasgow Film and Video Workshop—reconstituted EventSpace as an autonomous entity. Explicitly modelled upon Projects UK, EventSpace was a venueless arts organisation which produced events for non-gallery spaces,

⁶³ At the third and final Smith Biennial in 1989, prizes were awarded to Douglas Gordon, Julie Roberts and Jane and Louise Wilson.

often in the public realm. Departing from an exclusive focus on time-based media, the organisation would take site-specificity as its overarching focus. EventSpace was funded project-by-project via grants from the SAC and Glasgow District Council's Festivals Budget, reaping the benefits of the significant cultural investment which preceded the city's European City of Culture 1990 title, bestowed in 1986 (Dickson, 2020).

In 1988, EventSpace organised a third and final iteration of their namesake showcase, *EventSpace 3* (11 April – 23 April 1988) at Transmission. This edition comprised a video library drawn mainly from the catalogue of London Video Arts and four weekend screening programmes (Bain, 1988). Returning to a greater emphasis on film and video, its contributors included several DJCA alumni alongside Sankofa Film and Video Collective, John Latham, Ian Breakwell, Catherine Elwes, Rose Garrard, Lydia Shouten and Tina Keane (McLauchlan and Stephenson, 2001, p. 114). Through the profile of these artists, *EventSpace 3* also initiated a positive, albeit tentative, departure from the dominance of white and male voices which had so characterised its earlier incarnations.

That same year, the National Review of Live Art (1979–2010) migrated with its director Nikki Milican from Riverside Studios, London, to the Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, where she had taken a role as performance programmer. In the edition prior, the NRLA had supported students of the Environmental Art pathway Gordon, Richardson and Euan Sutherland, working together as tradition:debilitation, to present their 'marathon performance' *Seven Hours* (1987) (Harding, 2002).⁶⁴ Following this relocation, Stephen Partridge was installed as curator of the NRLA's growing video section and over the next three editions would oversee presentations by Mineo Aayamaguchi, Lei Cox and Chris Rowland (5–9 October 1988); Aayamaguchi, Paul Green, Daniel Reeves and Jeremy Welsh (11–15 October 1989); and Marty St. James and Anne Wilson, plus a video retrospective of five-years of experimental performance (10–14 October 1990) (Knight, 1996a, pp. 370–372). Working with porous definitions, the NRLA promoted the 'uncategorisable fields of very visual theatre, dance, video and other boundary-blurring work' (Hemming, 1988, p. 8), providing a modest platform for interdisciplinary videomakers to assemble and exhibit.

For their first project independent of Transmission, EventSpace revisited their relationship with Stuart Brisley to present his touring collaboration with Maya Balcioglu, *The Cenotaph*

⁶⁴ Restaged the following year for the TEC's *New Work / No Definition* season (21–24 October 1988).

Project (1987–1991), at the Pearce Institute in August 1988 (Dickson, 2008a, p. 56). A sculptural work, *The Cenotaph Project* comprised models of the Whitehall Cenotaph scaled to fit within a standard council flat. At each tour location, these monuments would be added to, rearranged and recontextualised, forming a generative project arc. Coinciding with the Glasgow Garden Festival (26 April – 26 September 1988), which occupied several acres of neighbouring dockland and also served to commemorate the centenary of Glasgow’s first International Exhibition (1888), the presentation in Govan, with its highly particular history of industry and decline, provoked questions about the interface of state and society (Dickson, 2008a). Through *The Cenotaph Project*, EventSpace were also able to first articulate a signature approach of producing events that invoke social history on a site-specific basis, later finding its apotheosis in their city-wide programme *Sites/Positions* (17–31 March 1990).

Dickson continued to develop his own artistic practice alongside running EventSpace and *Variant* until around 1991 and following his experience in making *Arrival/Departure* at the Television Workshop in 1987 was motivated to undertake the postgraduate diploma in Electronic Imaging at DJCA (Dickson, 2020). Between 1988 and 1989, he produced a handful of video works including *The Burning* (1988), a lurid document of a ‘non-art’ action by Ken Murphy-Roud on Glasgow Green for The Festival of Non-Participation (8 August 1988) in which effigies of art, commerce and politics including a Scottish Development Agency logo, photocopied portraits of Margaret Thatcher ‘in the style of Andy Warhol’ and a Poll Tax form were ceremonially burned, narrated by Pete Horobin (AKA Peter Haining) (Dickson, 1988a).



Figure 39: Dickson, M. (1988) *The Burning*. [3/4" U-Matic videotape, colour] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

Alongside these, Dickson used the resources at DJCA to assemble three anthology-style tapes which would extend the mission of *Variant*, where he presided as editor until 1994. An experiment in artist-led media dubbed ‘the magnetic magazine’ (Variant, 1989), *Variant Video* now forms a remarkably rich impression of video practice within its wider artistic and social context. An initial pilot edition, *Variant Video* (1988) comprised an interview with George Wyllie and a profile of Puberty Institution, both at the Society of Scottish Artists’ 1988 Annual Exhibition; a slideshow of performance documentation by Euan Sutherland; Dickson’s video *The Burning*; a second bonfire themed work by Horobin, *Dysart on 5th November 1988* (1988); and a lengthy feature on AVE Festival 1988 (Dickson, 1988b). Each of these segments is filtered through various effects and distortions, lending the package a unified style and blurring the distinctions between artwork and documentary forms. This pilot, Dickson (2020) notes, was a fairly limited edition, though it established a model for the series’ two more focused iterations: *Workers City* (1989) and *Video Art: The Midnight of the Decade* (1989). Released to coincide with the seventh issue of the print magazine, the production and distribution of c.500 VHS tapes was supported by Projects UK, *Variant* and DJCA’s Student Production Fund (Dickson, 2020). Produced and directed by Dickson, the tapes represent the twin axes of his personal concerns as both artist and organiser: radical leftist thought in Scotland and video as an emancipatory means of creative expression.⁶⁵

Workers City comprised four oral history interviews with working-class thinkers John Taylor Caldwell, Hamish Henderson, Farquhar McLay and James D. Young, connecting to its namesake Workers City Group and a sphere of related socialist initiatives like the Free University of Glasgow (1987–1991), *Scratch Parliament* (1988) and *Self-Determination and Power* (Pearce Institute, 1990)—a conference keynoted by philosopher Noam Chomsky.⁶⁶ *Video Art: The Midnight of the Decade*, meanwhile, featured a series of interviews conducted at the first edition of Video Positive, Liverpool (1989–2000) intercut with video work by student peers at DJCA and a profile feature on Pictorial Heroes (Dickson, 2020). The tape offers a useful document of recent trends and anxieties around video, particularly—as the title implies—as the medium transitioned into a new era. Interviewees include the festival’s curator Eddie Berg, Anna Ridley, Simon Robertshaw, Mike Stubbs and Willem Velthoven, who express a collective sense of frustration at video’s hermetic condition.

⁶⁵ *Variant* also launched an audio cassette tape (C90 format) at the same time. ‘The Unseen Collection’ featured sound work by artists The Puberty Institution amongst others and was organised by Billy Clark.

⁶⁶ For more on these events and the history of leftist organising in Scotland, see Birrell and Finlay (2002).

Berg, for instance, remarks that ‘all the video events I’ve ever been to have only been attended by video artists or *medianiks* [...] video art really needs to be opened up an enormous amount,’ whilst Stubbs puts it more bluntly: ‘the video world is a small one, everybody’s either slept with one another or been to the same college’ (Dickson, 1989a). Founder of Mediamatic, Amsterdam, Velthoven (quoted in Dickson, 1989a) echoes familiar complaints about segregation in exhibitionary contexts:

several works are put together and shown in one evening and very often the main reason to put those works together is because they are all video art tapes. I think it’s often more interesting to find another theme and not let your theme be *video art*.

To break with video’s isolationism, Robertshaw advocates for a move away from the long shadow of 1970s formalism, for artists ‘addressing themselves to more contemporary issues, more political issues’ (Dickson, 1989a). That political impulse proliferates in the videos interspersed throughout the tape. Bookended by punk band Exalt’s (*The Poison is*) *Blowing in the Wind* (1987) and *Support Your Local Police* (1987), with running themes of nuclear disarmament, Thatcherism and urban decay—within the context of the late Cold War—*Video Art: The Midnight of the Decade* promoted a highly engaged version of artistic video practice.⁶⁷ Alongside this repositioning, an abundant use of 3D computer animation also signalled new visual possibilities for the medium, particularly prominent in the contributions of artists Cavan Convery and John Butler, latterly of the Butler Brothers.



Figure 40: Butler, J. (1989) *World Peace Thru Free Trade* in Dickson, M. (1989) *Video Art: The Midnight of the Decade*. [3/4" U-Matic videotape, colour] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

⁶⁷ Artists included Justin Bretton (*Wishing Upon a Star*, n.d.); John Butler (*Zerotime*, n.d.; *World Peace Thru Free Trade*, 1989); Guy Carpenter (*The Winged Instrument*, n.d.); Cavan Convery, (*Flushot*, 1989; *Medium Tedium*, 1988); Malcolm Dickson (*Stone*, 1989); Sarah Downes (*The Weather Outside*, n.d.); Ian Elliot (*RGB*, n.d.); Jak Milroy (*Musihands*, n.d.); Garreth Roberts (*Journey Towards the End of the Day*, n.d.); Jamie Russel; Andrew Smith (*Woodyard Romance*, n.d.); and Andrew Whiteford (*A New Metropolis*, n.d.).

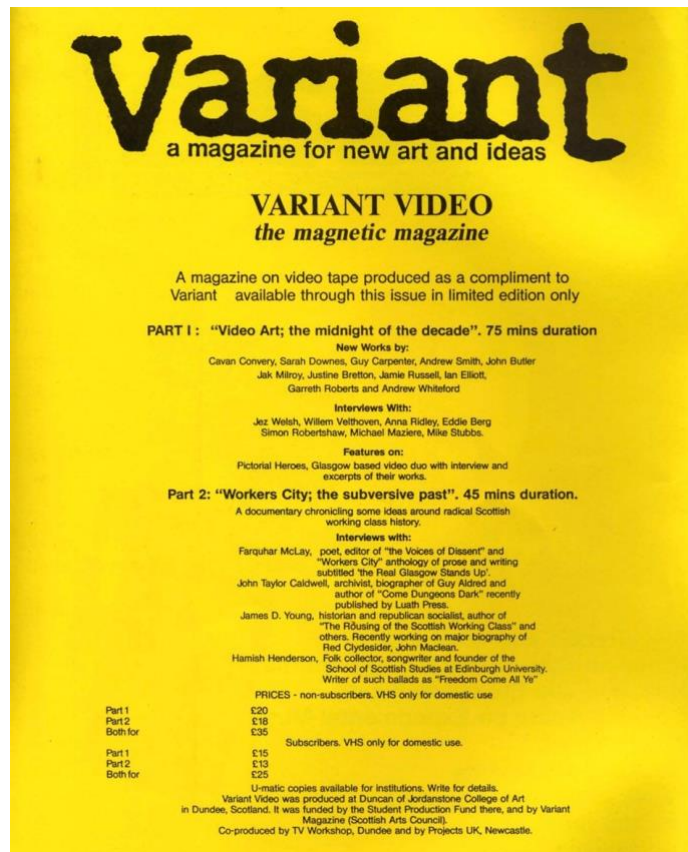


Figure 41: 'Variant Video: The Magnetic Magazine' (1989) *Variant*, 1(7), p. 2.

It is difficult to evaluate the impact of the *Variant Video* tapes, or indeed packages like *Made in Scotland II*, in no small part due to their novel form and its irreconcilability within the format of traditional arts criticism in Scotland. A short review of *Variant Video* in *The List*, however, points to planned circulation of the 'challenging and vital' tapes via the festival circuit, with premieres at Transmission (26 and 28 October 1989) followed by presentations at Brussels International Super 8 Film and Video Festival, AVE Festival and the ICA (Chalmers, 1989, p. 56). Dickson (2020) remembers later attending the *Next 5 Minutes* (1993–2003), a festival and conference in Amsterdam focused on 'tactical media,' and finding on arrival at its main venue, Paradiso, that *Variant Video* was being projected at huge scale. Further iterations of the magnetic magazine were intended; Dickson recorded interviews with artists and activists and was also involved in documenting the *Self-Determination and Power* event. Concentrations shifted, however, with the expansion of EventSpace and its eventual successor New Visions International Festival of Film and Video, ultimately leaving ambitions for the democratic new format unfilled.

The existential crises in video at the end of the 1980s, captured so neatly by *Video Art: The Midnight of the Decade*, are mirrored in publishing from the time. Writing for *Variant's* print

edition, Jeremy Welsh (1989, p. 47) expanded on these anxieties declaring ‘Video Art is History and is even now settling (comfortably) into its new home, The Museum.’ Acceptance and cooperation within the structures of the artworld, hard-won by some, was a death knell for video’s radical potential to others. By the early 1990s, *video art* as a designation of hermetic and self-referential media practices had become untenable for many, leading to the expulsion of residual formalist tendencies in various writings. Producer John Wyver’s essay ‘The Necessity of Doing Away with Video Art’ (1991), for one, argued that ‘video as video prevents, or at least limits, cross fertilisation with other elements of that culture, from digital imaging, from film, from interactive and other technologies, from television.’ (1996, p. 318).

For Alexander Alberro (2008, p. 69), 1989 marked the beginning of changes summarised amongst historicisation via the ‘periodising concept’ of globalisation. One characteristic of this turn, he offers, is ‘the emergence of a new technological imaginary following the unexpected and unregulated global expansion of the new communication and information technologies of the Internet’ (2008, p. 70). For the artworld, globalisation manifested in a number of ways: ‘technological art objects have increasingly come to replace tangible ones in art galleries and museums [...] the white cube has begun to be replaced by the black box, the small-screen film or video monitor by the large-scale wall projection’ (2008, p. 70). As beneficiaries of said globalisation, videomakers negotiated the potential complicity of their medium in differing ways. Welsh (1989, p. 47), for instance, also warns:

Video artists should proceed with caution; the playground of Virtual Technologies, Virtual Cultures may turn out to be a minefield, or the threshold of a new place where you have to leave the baggage of your philosophy, your morality, at the hat check. [...] Video itself was developed as a military technology and the computers we play with are a spin off from the space programme, from weapons research.

These anxieties and others, I contend, precipitated the end of video as video, inaugurating new factions between those intent on addressing the problems of an emergent digital culture—*guerrilla video* or *tactical media*—and those, drawing upon post-media philosophy, for whom video constitutes one tool in the repertoire of a contemporary artistic practice. In Scotland, as elsewhere in the 1990s, these two approaches would be consolidated in the splitting of the flawed event-exhibition hybrid and development of two distinct exhibitionary contexts: the film and video festival, a nexus for organising and exchange; and the digital video installation, a new form of spectacle.

Chapter Four: 1990–1999

4.1 Glasgow 1990

In Scotland, the campaign of globalisation at the turn of the decade was encapsulated most aggressively by Glasgow's reconception as European City of Culture (ECoC) 1990.⁶⁸ A European Union directive, the ECoC was established in 1985 but its allocation to Glasgow represented the title's first use as a catalyst for post-industrial renewal. Glasgow 1990 was supported by the Festivals Unit, a purpose-built department of the Glasgow District Council (GDC) established in 1987 to centralise programming and administrate the Festivals Budget. The scale of activity was later reported by the Unit's Visual Arts Officer Tessa Jackson (1991, p. 7): '3,649 events involving 1,066 organisations, costing over £50m, 40% coming from public funds.' Curator-turned-politician Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt (2016) offers the view that Glasgow 1990, amongst other things, offered a testbed for regeneration strategies key to the modelling of the neoliberal 'creative city,' as coined by urbanist Charles Landry.

At astonishing scale, Glasgow 1990 fused the city's economic success with its cultural vitality, presumptively hailed a success, Gordon-Nesbitt (2016) notes, 'almost before it had happened.' The actual extent of that correlation is hotly contested; one impact study found 'little evidence' of 'a clear contribution to local economic development' (Booth and Boyle, 1993, p. 45). Nevertheless, Glasgow 1990 and the cultural strategy that followed were informed by this promise, installing an ethos that would see resource for cultural projects made contingent upon their touristic potential, prioritising spectacle over community. Its programme instituted a number of lasting infrastructural changes, not least in the opening of Tramway (1990–) as a permanent multi-arts venue, and in the construction of the Royal Concert Hall (1990–) (Henry, 1990). The year also marked a transition of cultural power in Scotland: whilst in the 1980s Glasgow established itself as a locus of production and critical discourse, in 1990 the city offered a further contest to Edinburgh's primacy, via national festivals and institutions, as the consumptive centre. As urbanist Cliff Hague (2021, p. 40) argues, 'Glasgow had successfully challenged Edinburgh on the specific grounds on which the capital's pre-eminence had been self-presumed to be impregnable.'

No single thing, Glasgow 1990 encompassed an unwieldy range of activities linked only in their subsidy by the Festivals Budget. On one hand, it comprised flagship events like *The Big*

⁶⁸ Renamed European Capital of Culture in 1999.

Day (George Square, 3 June 1990), a free concert featuring homegrown musical talent including Texas and The Associates, and blockbuster exhibitions like *The Age of Van Gogh* (The Burrell Collection, 10 November 1990 – 10 February 1991). On the other, it facilitated multifaceted, artist-led projects like *Sites/Positions* (17–31 March 1990), *19:4:90 Television Interventions* (Channel 4, 1–4 June 1990), Daniel Reeves' video installation *The Well of Patience* (The Pearce Institute, 29 June – 2 September 1990) and major undertakings by Women in Profile (WIP): *Womanhouse* (13–28 September 1990), which transformed an entire Castlemilk tenement block into a collaborative feminist artwork, and HERTAKE International Women's Film Festival (1–30 September 1990).⁶⁹

As *Variant* ('Glasgow After 1990,' 1990, p. 8) reported, 'the existence of the Festivals Unit within the council has meant that a vast resource of money has been available for non-gallery-based activities and the Unit's relatively "no-strings attached" policy has given incentive to "special projects."' This windfall was met with some trepidation as the longevity of the budget—and the infrastructure it brokered—remained stubbornly unclear. In 1990, the Festival Unit ostensibly represented the 'art department' ('Glasgow After 1990,' 1990, p. 8) of the GDC, presupposing a gap in support upon its termination. Only in December were plans articulated for the ongoing management of festival sites such as Tramway via new appointments, as described in *The List*: 'THE FUTURE of Glasgow as one of the world's leading arts venues in the years after 1990 has become more realistic with the creation of the new post of Director of Performing Arts' (Morrison, 1990a, p. 4). That guardianship was given to Robert Palmer, who had overseen the Festivals Unit. Placing the visual arts under the auspices of theatre, this administration would spawn longstanding tensions between artforms and their promoters, particularly at Tramway (Esche, 2020).

Though on one level Glasgow 1990 inaugurated an era of *festivalisierung* (Häußermann and Siebel, 1993) or festivalisation which inculcated certain attitudes towards the function of arts subsidy that, for better or worse, endure today, it also opened doors to the appropriation of those funds by grassroots organisers. As Alexandra-Maria Colta and María Vélez-Serna (2019) note, 'many artists and cultural workers who were critical of ECoC's spectacle and bureaucracy also seized the funding opportunities it did afford.' Projects like *Sites/Positions* and *Womanhouse*, for instance, sought to directly address notions of periphery and centre,

⁶⁹ Women in Profile (1987–1991) was a community arts and activist organisation established to ensure the representation of women's culture during Glasgow 1990. It founded and was subsumed by the Glasgow Women's Library in 1991.

fuelled by concern for the communities neglected by flagship events. Despite their autonomy from the mission of their sponsor, I argue that such events were still mobilised within the project of regeneration. Whilst they freely offered counter-narratives to notions like the ‘creative city,’ their inclusion also testified to the cultural authenticity, diversity and engaged character of the place. As WIP co-founder Adele Patrick (n.d.) remembers, ‘it was evident that Glasgow’s guardians of culture and the local press at the time were keen to promote and to a degree manufacture a vanguard of visual arts mavericks as standard bearers of the regenerating city.’

As the campaign of festivalisation developed into the 2000s, the non-compliance of grassroots activity was itself ingested as a marketable asset. Actions taken by financial necessity, such as the practice of exhibiting within homes and derelict buildings, are recuperated by the city as social proof of cultural vitality. Mason Leaver-Yap (2020) suggests that DIY approaches are taken when institutional support is insufficient and, ‘perversely, a kind of neoliberal narrative has celebrated that as a unique identifier.’ They also warn that ‘we have to be careful to not celebrate all of the limitations because the limitations don’t necessarily always produce the work, work is produced in spite of the limitations.’ That is to say, whilst Glasgow 1990 and its successors brought short- and longer-term injections of resource to a cultural ecology, it is their prerogative to simultaneously flatten all the complexity and dissent of that culture into a city branding exercise.

In fact, this extractive process was actively refined by policy-makers using Glasgow 1990 as a case study. Compiled by Landry’s consultancy firm, Comedia, shortly after the event and designed to inform the council’s Creative City Strategy, an advisory report glibly titled *Making the Most of Glasgow’s Cultural Assets* noted that ‘Glasgow’s cultural product is not sold as well as it should be outside of the City’ (Comedia, 1991, p. 5). It highlighted a weakness in the city’s marketing of visual arts and recommended that the Glasgow Development Agency ‘should explore the possibility of mounting a substantial internationally recognized and well marketed exhibition each year. Ideally this should be contemporary art’ (Comedia, 1991, p. 15). These recommendations prefigure the reconceptualisation of cultural policy in Scotland over the next three decades which, following a handful of shorter-lived precursors, succeeds in manifesting that annual, latterly

biennial, exhibition via Glasgow International (GI, 2005–).⁷⁰ For artists' moving image, Glasgow 1990 heralded permanent shifts in exhibition, audience and provision; the following pages introduce the most prominent actors in this intersection.

4.1.1 Tramway in 1990

The Comedia (1991, p. 6) report detailed 'six key regenerator projects,' offered as a means of implementing its Creative City Strategy, the first of which was Tramway. A cavernous nineteenth century tram shed, the building was used in 1988 for Peter Brook's production of *The Mahabharata*, a nine-hour stage adaptation of the eponymous Indian epic poem. It wasn't until 1990, however, that the venue began to host exhibitions too. These included, amongst others, monumental installations by David Mach (*Here to Stay*, 5 March – 29 April 1990) and George Lappas (*Dice Works*, 12 July – 26 August 1990). Multifunctionality, the report suggested, was a key principle: 'by focusing a range of activities at the Tramway a critical mass could be achieved. If the level of activity can be generated the Tramway could become a creative hub of a creative city' (Comedia, 1991, p. 7).

Through its scale alone, Tramway offered a sense of creative possibility. Director of the bacchanal-like performance *Jock Tamson's Bairns* (25 January – 24 February 1990), Gerry Mulgrew (quoted in Morrison, 1990b, p. 4) describes how 'the actual space itself is inspiration. It gives you the possibility to explore a multitude of innovative stagings.' This sense of gigantism aligned well with both the GDC's newfound emphasis on spectacle and wider developments in the display of moving image driven by the new possibilities of digital projection. Erika Balsom (2013b, p. 20) offers that 1990 saw 'the advent of a different, more cinematic paradigm of moving images within the gallery, largely due to this "triumph of projection over monitor-based presentation."' Tramway's largest space, as Gordon-Nesbitt (2016) notes, 'lent itself to the large-scale installations and film projections typical of that era.' Whilst the archetype for this form of exhibition might have been Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), it wasn't the first exercise in immersive projection display at the venue.

Building upon the supportive partnership between Channel 4 and the Scottish Film Production Fund which Lesley Keen established in the making of *Taking a Line for a Walk* (1983) and *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1984), the animator realised two final projects for

⁷⁰ Defunct multi-venue annual and biennial festivals in Glasgow include Mayfest (1983–1997), New Visions International Festival of Film and Video (1992, 1994, 1996) and Fotofeis Scottish International Festival of Photography (1993, 1995, 1997).

Glasgow 1990: *Burrellesque* (1990), an ode to Glasgow’s Burrell Collection in which its artefacts, spirits reanimated, run amok through Pollok Park; and *Ra: The Path of the Sun God* (1990), her only feature-length work. *Ra* was five years in production and at 72-minutes in duration represented the last and largest undertaking by Persistent Vision, the home of Keen’s author films—supported by £3,225 for script development in December 1983 and £35,000 in production funding in June 1985 from the SFPF (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1983b, 1985). Through Keen’s characteristic graphic language of luminous lines constantly in flux, on a flat, infinite, picture plane, *Ra* visualised the Ancient Egyptian creation myth of Osiris and Isis in three stages: *Dawn, Noon* and *Night*. Advancing upon animation techniques of ‘painting with light’ pioneered in the making of *Invocation* (1984), the 35mm feature involved a simple but painstaking process of hole-punching, backlit and coloured by gels (Keen, 2020).

Unlike prior work, however, *Ra* presented additional challenge in its exhibition. The film premiered at Filmhouse for Edinburgh International Film Festival on 16 August 1990 before being reconstituted for Glasgow 1990 as a vast installation at Tramway (29 August – 6 September 1990) (*The List*, 1990b, p. 61). Replete with hand-painted wall-hangings, a bespoke portico structure and thirteen tonnes of sand recycled from *The Mahabharata* (Keen, 2020), Tramway was transformed into a holistic viewing environment to host a week of nightly screenings, contextualised by a display of production artwork and events including an introductory talk from consultant Egyptologist Geraldine Pinch (Tramway, 1990). One review dubbed the experience ‘a visual and audible treat’ that ‘goes against certain cinematic conventions’ (Parr, 1990, p. 65). Evading traditional categories of display, promotional material explained that ‘the film as an experience inhabits a zone between cinema and theatre which is why the Tramway is such a marvellous setting’ (Tramway, 1990).



Figure 42: Keen, L. (1990) *Ra: The Path of the Sun God*. [35mm film, colour] Courtesy of Lesley Keen.



Figure 43: Documentation of Keen, L. (1990) *Ra: The Path of the Sun God* at Tramway, Glasgow. [Photographs] Courtesy of Lesley Keen.

When the film was recaptured for television broadcast later that year, however, its unorthodox form was compromised. In a letter to Keen, Channel 4's Commissioning Editor for Animation expressed that:

Many of us at the Channel, including our head of scheduling, have spent a lot of time worrying about the slotting of *Ra*. Everyone feels that, although it's sumptuously beautiful, the information is so dense and the pacing so even that it's terribly hard to watch in one go. (Kitson, 1990)

Consequently, *Ra* was split into its component sections and broadcast over three consecutive Saturday afternoons on Channel 4 (24 November—8 December 1990), 'and then it died,' Keen (2020) laments. In extending the signature techniques of her experimental practice, Keen's only feature offered something that was difficult to reconcile within the increasingly market-oriented arena of broadcast. *Ra*'s broadcast coincided with the assent of Margaret Thatcher's Broadcasting Act 1990 which deregulated the industry, making Channel 4 responsible for their own advertising sales and, in doing so, transformed its priority from fringe programming to the mass market.

In moving between the three dominant sites of moving image display—film theatre, gallery and broadcast—*Ra* offers a productive study of exhibition in transition in 1990. In its installation version, surrounded by the additional context of production artwork and educational programming, though still clinging to the linear screening event format, it anticipated the new era of projection as spectacle. At the same time, *Ra*'s mishandling in the broadcast sphere pointed to an abnegation of responsibility for peripheral forms of film and video elsewhere; *Ra* was Keen's last project supported by Channel 4. In straddling these same, shifting exhibition contexts, however, Keen's feature wasn't unique, even amongst Glasgow 1990 projects.

4.1.2 19:4:90 Television Interventions (1990)

In early 1989, Jane Rigby and husband Stephen Partridge, working together as Fields & Frames Productions, enlisting Anna Ridley as co-producer, circulated a commissioning brief for a project then titled *21 TV Pieces*, labelled 'the televisual event of 1990' and inviting proposals of short works produced in Scotland for television broadcast that 'embody a response, in broad terms either to Glasgow or Scotland' (Fields & Frames Productions, 1989). With co-funding from Channel 4 and the Festivals Budget agreed, an outline was submitted to the SFPF requesting £25,000 in production subsidy in June of that year (The

Scottish Film Production Fund, 1989a). Rejected, a list of participants was added to a revised request of £24,000 in September 1989, again meeting an impasse (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1989b). The project was seemingly downscaled and rebranded *19:4:90 Television Interventions*. Modelled upon David Hall's landmark *TV Interruptions*, thirteen new works were ultimately commissioned between September 1989 and April 1990, each four-minutes duration, designed to slot into commercial breaks (Partridge, 1990b, p. 5). The selection of artists cut across networks, including familiar associates of the Television Workshop—Partridge, Pictorial Heroes and Stephen Littman; Scots achieving mainstream success, including Bruce McLean and David Mach; and practitioners from across the UK and Europe, including Pratibha Parmar and Raul Rodriguez.⁷¹



Figure 44: Mach, D. (1990) *The Clydeside Classic (Part 4)*. [1" SMPTE Type C videotape, colour] Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

Amongst the most memorable of these, Mach's *The Clydeside Classic* (1990) imagined a fictional snooker tournament between real players Stephen Hendry and Rae Reardon at Tramway. Over four parts, the pastiche gradually reveals itself through increasingly unruly physics: the green felt ripples; the cue passes through the ball; and, in the surreal climax, the table liquifies, a hand springing forth and dragging Hendry into the depths (Mach, 1990). In this instance, the video marked a temporary and playful departure from the sculptor's regular

⁷¹ In full, the new commissions included Robert Cahen's *On the Bridge* (1990); Rose Garrard's *Celtic in Mind* (1990); Ron Geesin's *Closerap* (1990); David Hall's *Stooky Bill TV* (1990); Stephen Littman's *Big Time – The House* (1990); David Mach's *The Clydeside Classic* (1990) over four parts; Bruce McLean's *Mackintosh 2* (1990); Alistair MacLennan's *Hit* (1990); Peter Missotten's *I Was Looking For You* (1990); Pratibha Parmar's *Bhangra Jig* (1990); Stephen Partridge's *The Sounds of These Words* (1990); Pictorial Heroes' *George Squared 1919–1990* (1990); and Raul Rodriguez' *The Faces of Glasgow* (1990).

practice. For others, the project offered a means of extending their message into living rooms nationwide. Pictorial Heroes' *George Squared 1919–1990* (1990) offered a 360-degree view of Glasgow's central civic space. A re-enactment of The Battle of George Square (1919), wherein Red Clydeside labour strikers were met with a violent military response, is juxtaposed with images of contemporary Poll Tax demonstrations on the same site and newsreel of the revolutions of 1989 in East Germany and the People's Republic of China (Pictorial Heroes, 1990). Whilst George Square became the much-televised locus of Glasgow 1990 celebrations, the video reveals its palimpsestic history as a site of protest, and, in focusing on the proliferation of CCTV systems, alludes to the new role of surveillance in placating radical action today. The intervention, Pictorial Heroes (quoted in Partridge, 1990a, p. 10) state, is 'directed at our "remote-controlled, arm-chair world view" of events happening around us >> catching a revolution in between advertising breaks or watching "cultural" walls tumbling between mega rock n'roll events for one worthy cause or another.' In this way, *George Squared*, unlike earlier works, ingested the display context of broadcast, placing Pictorial Heroes' disruptive agitprop in an antagonistic dialogue with televisual flow.



Figure 45: Pictorial Heroes (1990) visual references for *George Squared 1919–1990*. Held at: Dundee: University of Dundee, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, REWIND Archive.

Another work to take on Glasgow's hostile architectures, Pratibha Parmar's *Bhangra Jig* (1990), follows a young South Asian woman moving through the historic city centre as she encounters colonial insignia, endowed to the city by eighteenth century merchants, the Tobacco Lords (Parmar, 1990). Images of stone friezes and cast-iron statues celebrating these dead white men are superimposed with oversaturated footage of Bhangra musicians and dancers, offering pride and celebration as means of defying dominant ideology. As an address

to Glasgow's South Asian diaspora, the video also honours a lived experience which was absent not only from public memorialisation, but from Scotland's artistic and cultural life in the main. Artist-filmmaker Alia Syed who grew up in suburban Glasgow before moving to London to study in 1982 felt a change in how inclusivity figured within Scotland's emerging civic nationalism at this time. 'What shifted,' she remembers, 'was the Glasgow City of Culture; [...] I did start to get invited to Scotland, it was quite different really. I don't think anyone really thought I was Scottish and I think that's racism basically' (Syed, 2020).

Another expression of the multiculturalist expansion delivered under Glasgow 1990 can be found in the Glasgow Mela, an annual festival of music and dance from the Indian sub-continent, first held at Tramway (20–30 September 1990). Almost a decade after the workshop movement had advanced postcolonial film and video production in England via the work of groups like Black Audio Film Collective, *Bhangra Jig* presented a first on-screen reckoning with Scotland's own complicity in the transatlantic slave trade as acutely manifest in Glasgow, *the Second City of the Empire*.

The thirteen commissions were supplemented by four of Hall's interruptions and two gleaned from *Telly Pieces*, an associated community initiative led by Doug Aubrey. This scheme offered training to young people aged fifteen to twenty from some of Strathclyde's most deprived areas: Greenock, Possilpark and the Red Road flats housing complex. Seven projects were taken from storyboard to realisation, with two being further developed for broadcast: Allan Trotter and David Black's *Another Victim* (1990), a kitchen sink elegy set amid the industrial dereliction of Greenock; and Sinclair Short and David Carswell's *Crisis—What Crisis?* (1990) which, set in the shadow of the Faslane naval base, juxtaposes potential nuclear catastrophe with the nihilistic excess of nightclubbing (Partridge, 1990a, p. 34).

Though intended for year-round release, the nineteen collected works were broadcast over the first four days of June on Channel 4 and, unlike Hall's original experiment, were prefaced by an introduction from art critic Waldemar Januszczak, then appointed Commissioning Editor for Arts. Ahead of broadcast, Rigby (quoted in Lappin, 1990, p. 76) explained that 'if you announce them, you have to label them art. [...] The one thing you don't want to do is mediate between the work of art and viewing public.' Against this recommendation, she later recalls how Januszczak 'insisted upon mediating the works by recording his own introduction' (Rigby quoted in Knight, 1996a, p. 370). Mick Hartney (1996, p. 50) has also bemoaned the defusal of the series through its repeated announcement and the reactionary

critic's 'disarming explanations.' Where two-decades earlier Hall's interruptions had delivered a sharp riposte to conventional broadcast—certain backlash notwithstanding—such an anomaly was, it seems, impossible to replicate within television's increasingly labyrinthine bureaucracy.⁷² In one review, Calum McKintyre (1990, p. 53) measured the scale of the task:

The notion of 'intervention' implies the taking up of some position which intends to challenge accepted ways, power structures, the mainstream, etc. Whilst it might be wholly unfair to say that the *19:4:90* project was invested with a radicality it did not in fact possess, it is not incorrect to say that the pluralistic nature of TV embraces acceptable critical stances but denies dissent and creativity.

McKintyre (1990, p. 53) questions whether artists' work can survive the 'long journey of control and censorship' without capitulating to the broadcaster's agenda. The possibility of effective critique from within the system, he suggests, is something of a foregone conclusion. In this way, *19:4:90* offers an epilogue to certain forms of video practice: those underpinned by a vestigial structuralist analysis of the broadcast medium, as in the contributions of Hall, Partridge and Alastair MacLennan.⁷³ At the same time, the project welcomed a shift towards discourse of racial, gendered and classed representation as found in the work of Parmar, Rodriguez and the *Telly Pieces* youth initiative.

Just as the vision of Keen's *Ra* had been swallowed by new scheduling priorities, *19:4:90* was subject to corrosive levels of moderation. Amongst Channel 4's last forays into experimentation, the treatment of both offers an indication of the retraction and ultimate termination of the broadcaster's commitment to fringe programming. Like *Ra*, however, *19:4:90* had another life in the gallery, staged as an exhibition at the Third Eye Centre (9–24 June 1990) before touring to the Seagate Gallery (6–21 July 1990) and IKON Gallery, Birmingham (1–27 September 1990) (Partridge, 1990a). Partridge (1990b, p. 5) describes its three elements:

all of the broadcast works in a large display which sets them in a lively framework; the storyboards from the youth and community project *Telly Pieces* as well as the videotapes; and a selection of historical works which help to contextualise and hopefully expand the publics' [*sic*] perception of artists' television.

These historical works included a selection of video from the United States; six works produced by Annalogue Ltd—Ridley's own production company—including Ian Breakwell's

⁷² See section 2.3.1.

⁷³ Not incidentally, the REWIND research project situates *19:4:90* as the conclusion of its period of focus.

Continuous Diary (1984) and John Latham's *Cumbræ Clyde* (1984); and Keith Arnatt's *Self Burial* (1969) and Jan Dibbets' *4 Diagonalen* (1971), two land-art-adjacent tapes broadcast via Fernsehalerie Gerry Schum (1968–1970) and Videogalerie Schum (1971–1973) respectively (Partridge, 1990a).⁷⁴ The exhibition thereby positioned *19:4:90* within an international tradition, in some ways countering their idealised presentation as anomalies, stripped of pretext. Visiting the exhibition, Clare Henry (1990a) identified a dissonance between the intended *live* encounter and its simulacral reproduction in the gallery space, lacking, she found, in the same impact. *19:4:90* bore another legacy when eleven of the commissions were reassembled for a 55-minute touring package, *Television Interventions* (1993), also produced by Fields & Frames and available for hire, with display apparatus, throughout the UK and Europe (Fields & Frames Productions, 1993). The extent of this package's circulation is unclear though, broken up, a number of the commissions found new exhibition contexts: Rose Garrard's *Celtic in Mind* (1990) and Hall's *Stooky Bill* (1990) were included in a retrospective of artists' experiments in broadcast at Video Positive 1993 ('Video Positive 93,' 1993, p. 60) and MacLennan's *Hit* was reshowed on TV5 Québec Canada in 1995.

19:4:90 also bred successors. 'Hot on the heels of the *19:4:90 Television Interventions* project comes *Not Necessarily*,' one preview began ('Not Necessarily?,' 1990, p. 13). Commissioned by BBC Scotland and syndicated for broadcast across the UK on BBC 2, *Not Necessarily* developed upon the mission of its predecessor. With Partridge again co-producing, the project was slated to comprise between six and ten new works of ten-minutes duration ('Not Necessarily?,' 1990, p. 13). The programme was broadcast the following year as a series of eight episodes—housing four new commissions—premiering with Doug Aubrey's *Blood Tied and Colour Blind* (c.1991) in the unenviable slot of 11.45pm, Tuesday 25 June 1991 (*Evening Times*, 1991). Taking on the historic rivalry of Celtic and Rangers, Aubrey's video offered a *vérité* portrait of two Old Firm fans and their respective neighbourhoods, comically narrated by 'Archie Amphetamine' (Aubrey, 1990). Unlike *19:4:90*, *Not Necessarily* was explicitly packaged as a video art magazine, comprising an array of work by alumni or associates of the School of Television and Electronic Imaging including Chris Byrne, John Butler, Lei Cox, Judith Goddard, Stephen Kemp, Kate Meynell and Charles Wilson (Dickson, 1991). Reviewing the series, Malcolm Dickson (1991, p. 63)

⁷⁴ Often credited as the earliest broadcast platforms for video art (Meigh-Andrews, 2006).

described how the ‘indeterminate’ qualities of ‘continuum and fragmentation’ are what ‘theoretically and aesthetically retrieve *Not Necessarily* from limited effect’: its experiments in the sensorial experience of televisual flow (Kemp, Wilson), more than its demonstrations of technical proficiency (Cox, Meynell), lending the series its value.

4.1.3 Exploiting the event horizon

Following decades of promotion at the margins, now buoyed by the possibilities of digital projection, in 1990 the moving image approached an event horizon, becoming established as a permanent fixture in mainstream gallery programming. With this *fait accompli*, Glasgow 1990 offered a timely injection of resource and visibility that was exploited to accommodate splintering positions on the media. This opportunity was leveraged by some to realise unique, one-off projects with heightened profile and for others would supplement the deepening of their own programming agendas. Daniel Reeves’ exhibition *The Well of Patience* (Pearce Institute, 29 June – 2 September 1990), comprising the eponymous 1988–1990 installation, offers an archetype of the former. Cordelia Oliver (1990) took the measure of the work:

The aptly named Well Of Patience [*sic*] (the complete viewing cycle for those with time and stamina takes 90 minutes) which Daniel Reeves has installed in the big central hall at the Pearce Institute in Govan is of such a scale that it almost succeeds in dwarfing the sizeable 19th-century hall. Visualise a giant Victorian zoetrope multiplied in scale to become a translucent rotunda some 30 feet across.

A panorama of twelve video projections alternating between three separate channels revolves, viewed from a raised platform at the centre or externally, image-flipped, from all sides. Inside the cylindrical structure, concentric rings of miniature Buddha plaster casts sit atop poised rat-traps on the floor, whilst wine glasses and hammers are suspended from above, chiming with movements encouraged by a fan. These object pairs offer a symbolic tension, whereupon any disturbance of the equilibrium threatens destruction. Dubbed a ‘temple for the secular’ (Waite, 1990b, p. 55) in another review, Reeves’ monumental installation deals in scale and interconnection as subject and form: an attempt to capture the many articulations of life around the world on screen is met by the sheer volume and complexity of the physical system on display.

Citing Buddhist practices and western Gestalt theory, *The Well of Patience* might be best recuperated within a modernist framework in that it pursues an authenticity or truth of expression. Writing for *Variant*, Fiona Byrne-Sutton (1990, p. 52) positions it as such: ‘much modernist and late modernist work,’ she notes, ‘uses montage and fragmentation of imagery

and content to dissect social reality or to speak of anomaly and loss of meaning.’ The installation mobilises the techniques of poetry, theatre and even religious ceremony in order to invoke certain feelings and in doing so is distinguished from video’s long history of deconstructing its own illusionism. In this way, the work exemplifies what Chrissie Iles (2003, p. 137) dubs the *new cinematic aesthetic*, as emergent in the work of artists like Bill Viola and Douglas Gordon. This turn, she notes, is commensurate with the arrival of new display possibilities afforded by projection, ‘which has liberated the video image from the spatial restrictions of the monitor and magnified it hundreds of times, creating a movie-sized image that relates not to the object, but to the surrounding architectural space’ (2003, p. 140). In this new era, Erika Balsom (2013b, pp. 12, 15) observes ‘an unleashing of multiple medium specificities that disperse the notion of cinema across varied conceptual and material spaces’ cultivated in ‘cinematic tropes and conventions, such as *mise-en-scène*, montage, spectacle, narrative, illusionism, and projection.’

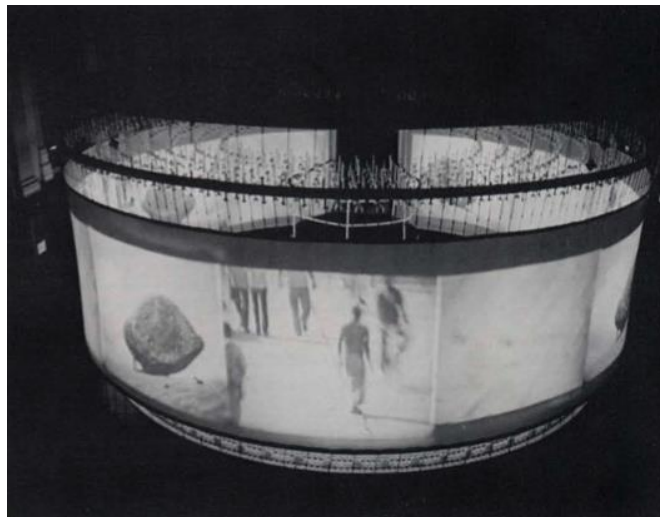


Figure 46: Gill, K. (1990) documentation of Reeves, D. (1988–1990) *The Well of Patience*, Pearce Institute, Glasgow [Photograph] In Byrne-Sutton, F. (1990) ‘The Well of Patience,’ *Variant* 1, (8), p. 52.

Reflecting this and more, *The Well of Patience*, in its pseudo-spiritualism, I add, also evokes historic expanded cinema environments like Stan VanDerBeek’s hemispherical *Movie-Drome* (1964–1965) and the attendant philosophies of media theorist Gene Youngblood (1970) who hoped that media technologies could provide access to new forms of consciousness. It is also important to consider who the privilege of this kind of omnivorous practice is afforded to; *The Well of Patience* exerts a licence over its many citations, trawled from the artist’s travels to ‘Asia, Africa, Europe, America and Scotland’ (Waite, 1990b, p. 55), which might reasonably be called extractive or indeed, culturally appropriative—another, less benevolent, characteristic of modernism.

Where Reeves' installation dealt with universal themes, for others film and video offered a means to amplify the hyperlocal. For Glasgow 1990, EventSpace realised a citywide programme of *situation-specific* artworks under the banner of *Sites/Positions* (17–31 March 1990). Three years in development, a call-out was circulated in autumn 1987, soliciting proposals that 'challenge the passive role provided for art within the gallery or museum' (EventSpace, 1987, p. 12). Six proposals progressed, four involving current and would-be Transmission committee members: Christine Borland, Douglas Gordon, Euan Sutherland and artist-filmmaker Gillian Steel, each focusing on the margins of the city and the marginalised of the festival.⁷⁵ Borland brought a one-tonne bale of compressed refuse from Glasgow's largest dump to Kelvingrove Museum, confronting the civic centre with its undesirable periphery. At the abandoned Glasgow Green Station, Gordon's mural *Mute* (1990) comprised six dates pertaining to 'the *forgotten history* of the area.' Steel, meanwhile, brought together girls from Sighthill housing schemes to challenge 'the limitations thrust upon them [...] by (sexist) social conditioning' via the collaborative production of an animated film, *Animate Her* (1990), for display at the Maryhill Arts Centre (EventSpace, 1990).

Those artists would also use the resource and visibility brought by Glasgow 1990 to advance their own programming agenda at Transmission, deepening the gallery's moving image engagement in particular. Steel (2020) remembers that Glasgow 1990, 'albeit within conflicting political and artistic sensibilities, put in a lot of support to Transmission.' In 1989, the gallery moved to new premises on King Street, enlisting Borland, Sutherland and Ann Vance, amongst others, to help with its renovation (Vance, 2020). In 1990, they were joined by Gordon, who, upon completion of the Environmental Art course, had undertaken postgraduate study at the Slade School of Art, London (1988–1990). Under the instruction of tutors like Laura Mulvey and John Hillard, Neil Mulholland (2003b, p. 146) suggests, there he encountered 'psychoanalytic Hollywood film theory and its attendant Photoconceptualism.' More than influence, however, Gordon's sojourn brokered links between scenes: over consecutive weekends in August that year Transmission held a season of film and video screenings featuring work from fellow Slade alumni Sarah Pucill (*You Be Mother*, 1990), Elsie Mitchell (*If the Eyes are Coloured*, 1990) and Sue Brind (*Remember Your Womb*, n.d.; *Luminous Shadows*, n.d.). Ivan Urwin screened his films *Eclipse* (1985) and *Toxic* (1990) and a touring programme assembled by Film and Video Umbrella, *The*

⁷⁵ With further contributions from Alison Marchant and Prolific Pamphleteer.

Body in Extremis (1989), included work by Jean Genet, Carolee Schneemann and Jayne Parker (*The List*, 1990a, p. 98). The season also platformed emerging local practitioners: Ewan Morrison presented the film installation *Re-action* (n.d.) and Vance showed *Mortal Signs* (n.d.) and *Super 8 Selection* (1989). Malcolm Dickson, meanwhile, introduced a screening of his *Variant Video* magazine (1989) and an intriguing package, *Welcome to Glasgow* (McLauchlan and Stephenson, 2001, p. 117).

By the 1990s, Transmission was also able to realise ambitious solo exhibitions with established artists like Keith Piper (*The Devil Finds Work*, 10–28 September 1990), Lawrence Weiner (*Exhibition and Public Work*, 27 November – 31 December 1991) and Stan Douglas (*Hors Champs*, 8 June – 3 July 1993), earlier shown at Documenta 9. A member of the BLK Art Group, Piper presented a three-part deconstruction of Black masculinity, comprising wall-based collage *Go West Young Man* (1990); ‘a dismembered sculpted figure,’ broken mirrors and projected text and photography, *The Devil Made Me Do It* (1990); and slide and video works including *The Nation’s Finest* (1990) which confront the ‘paradox’ of Black physical achievement celebrated in sporting contexts and the colonial subjugation of the same bodies (Waite, 1990a, p. 65). Troubling the tropes of sportscasting, Rizvana Bradley (2019, p. 76) describes how *The Nation’s Finest* ‘taps into a racist visual imaginary that establishes an equivalence between black athletic prowess and primitiveness.’

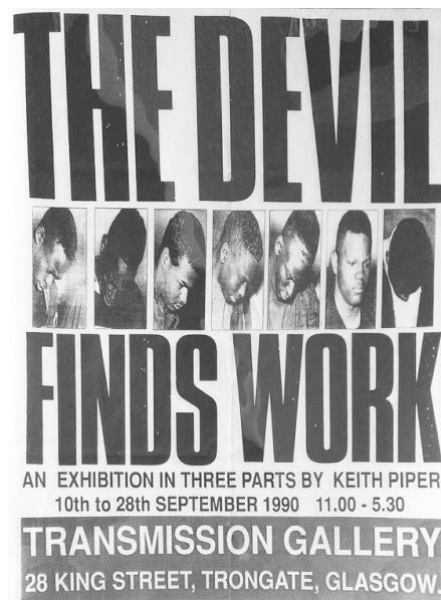


Figure 47: Transmission (1986) *The Devil Finds Work*. [Poster] Held at: Glasgow: Transmission Gallery Archive. Photograph courtesy of Tiffany Boyle.

Exhibitions at Transmission like *The Devil Finds Work* or Lubaina Himid's *Vernet's Studio* (1994) pose an convincing counter to the Glasgow Miracle narrative which, to the frustration of some (Jeffrey, 2014a), might have that the art scene sprang from nowhere, temporary and unattached. The gallery's programme instead acknowledges an immutable continuity between past and present political suffrage, variously calling upon postcolonial, feminist, Marxist and psychoanalytic analyses. As the YBA generation were ossifying around self-selecting pop-up exhibitions in London (*Freeze*, 1988; *Modern Medicine*, 1990; *Gambler*, 1990; *East Country Yard Show*, 1990), their Glasgow counterparts were providing space to others. Isabel Waidner (2021) has recently contended that,

Arguably, the yBas contributed to the marginalization of a generation of 1980s Black British artists—like John Akomfrah, Sonia Boyce, Chila Kumari Burman, Lubaina Himid, Isaac Julien, Keith Piper and Ingrid Pollard—whose work centred politics and race (then 'identity'), or the art that developed in relation to the AIDS crisis.

Where the YBA have elsewhere been charged with supplanting the political work of the 1980s, abdicating any custody for the recent past (Gronlund, 2019, p. 54), Transmission and the community it stood for remained active in reinforcing those links. One cause for this difference, I suggest, might be implicit to the rolling committee model adopted after 1987, in that, as a structure of perpetual inheritance, the gallery was compelled to consider itself in continuum. Unlike the free agents of the YBA, perhaps, the close proximity of Transmission and its community conferred a productive attachment to this past.

4.1.4 HERTAKE International Women's Film Festival (1990)

Like Transmission, Women in Profile looked to peers from earlier, more radical traditions for new models of exhibition, support and a critical understanding thereof. Though the politics of representation had underpinned film and video projects in Scotland intermittently throughout the 1970s and 1980s, surfacing at *The Women's Film Festival* (Edinburgh International Film Festival, 1972) and centred in exhibitions like *About Time* (Third Eye Centre, 1981), these issues had not found sustained advocacy in the same way as in England where feminist distributors like Circles (1979–1991), Cinema of Women (1979–1991) and the workshop movement supported a strategic commitment to collective action. In 1990, however, representation was finally brought to the fore in a concerted way through the work of WIP. Aiming to redress what Adele Patrick (quoted in France, 1990, p. 11) described as the 'huge masculinization' of Glasgow 1990, WIP in association with Women 2000 devised the Glasgow Women's Festival (1–30 September 1990). A multi-artform festival comprising

theatre, literature, music and visual arts, the Glasgow Women's Festival also provided the context for HERTAKE International Women's Film Festival (also 1–30 September 1990). Organised by Louise Crawford, Laura Hudson, Pauline Law and Jane Martin, HERTAKE unfolded across venues including the Glasgow Film Theatre, the Goethe-Institut, the French Cultural Delegation and the Scottish Council for Educational Technology with a programme of screenings and discursive events (*HERTAKE*, 1990).

Spanning Kathryn Bigelow's *Blue Steel* (1990) to a two-part programme of early Scottish film which proposed a reconsideration the documentary tradition through the many contributions of women—via Louise Annand, Helen Biggar, Budge Cooper, Jenny Gilbertson, Ruby and Marion Grierson and Margaret Tait, coordinated by Janet McBain of the Scottish Film Archive (*HERTAKE*, 1990)—the festival drew little distinction between commercial production and independent work. 'Hertake certainly achieves its declared aim of representing and celebrating women filmmakers in the broadest sense,' one article noted (*The List*, 1990c, p. 30). 'Women's film-making is not necessarily a shared tradition,' added another ('Women in Profile International Women's Film Festival,' 1990, p. 12):

The tremendous range and diversity of work owes much to circumstance—of birth, economics, geography, language, funding, institutions—perhaps most importantly, prevailing attitudes towards women at a particular time may inform what films get made and what form they take.

Indeed, the festival specifically sought to draw attention to conditions of production, historically and at present. Another focus, *Identity*, brought together an international selection of films which 'rework and reconstruct new cultural meaning presenting the personal and a subjective perspective as an integral part of the work' (*HERTAKE*, 1990). These included works by Diana Mavroleon, Tina Keane, Trinh T. Minh-ha and sisters Alia and Tanya Syed, who had grown up in Glasgow. Alia Syed (2020), who presented her student film *Durga* (1986), remembers the festival as an exchange 'between women from the London Film-Maker's Co-op and Glasgow women who were making films.'

A conference held over the final weekend sought to share learning with targeted sessions on production and distribution. The former asked 'why don't women get funding to work in Scotland? Is there a renaissance in Scottish Filmmaking? Why do so many women go to work in England?' The latter identified that,

Distribution is essential if work is not to exist in a vacuum. In Scotland there is no distribution agency. In England Circles and Cinema of Women—the main distributors of films by women face closure after the cuts in funding. Where do we go from here? (HERTAKE, 1990)

Though records of proceedings elude this research, the event had an evident effect on some attendees. Ann Vance (2020), studying at the Rijksakademie at the time, returned to Glasgow for the occasion: ‘I would say that was *the* event, for film and video.’ Although ‘it was London coming up,’ she remembers finding inspiration in presentations by LFMC members Moira Sweeney and Kathleen Maitland-Carter. These London-Glasgow links were further enhanced when co-organiser Hudson joined the LFMC as its film programmer in 1992.⁷⁶ A key advance, however, lay in the festival’s linking of contemporary practice with marginalised histories, underpinned by new research—Law and Crawford, for instance, travelled to interview Margaret Tait, then ‘unrecognised, if you like, compared to how she is now’ (Vance, 2020). As an organiser herself, for Vance (2020) the WIP events were ‘extremely important [...] in terms of feminist practice.’ Becoming involved in New Visions in 1992, she would carry a similar sense of feminist praxis into her own programming.



Figure 48: HERTAKE International Women's Film Festival (1990). [Programme brochure] Courtesy of Ann Vance.

⁷⁶ A reciprocity between scenes was revealed again some years later. Not long after HERTAKE, Circles and Cinema of Women merged to form Cinenova (1991–) which itself came under threat a decade later, losing its funding in 2001. Before alternative arrangements would ultimately secure its future, a transfer of assets to WIP’s own successor, the Glasgow Women’s Library (1991–), was first optioned. (Trotter, 2001).

4.1.5 *The carnival's over: Scotland after 1990*

Glasgow 1990 had buoyed the Scottish visual arts sector in many ways, leaving an improved infrastructure via sites like Tramway and injecting resource into organisations like Transmission, EventSpace and a vast number of one-off events. A post-1990 lull was anticipated by many. Writer Miranda France (1991, p. 4) remarked that ‘with so many cultural events riding on the backs of enthusiastic sponsors, it was inevitable that more than one artistic bubble would burst in 1991. The carnival’s over, after all, and the sponsors have gone home.’ The celebrations, however, obscured a more severe situation. Between 1990 and 1992, a fast-moving economic catastrophe in arts funding would lead to the closure of Glasgow’s Third Eye Centre and Edinburgh’s Fruitmarket Gallery, 369 Gallery and Richard Demarco Gallery, the latter two indefinitely.

In late 1990, the UK entered a recession for the first time since the beginning of Margaret Thatcher’s tenure, the effects of which continued past her resignation until 1993. This sparked a protracted financial crisis at the already precarious Scottish Arts Council, though publicly denied by its Art Director Lindsay Gordon (Clients of the Scottish Arts Council, 1991, p. 80). In February 1991, Cordelia Oliver (1991a, p. 33) reported that the Fruitmarket was to close at the end of the month, ‘or at least to be put on ice, its operation suspended and staff made redundant,’ after operating at a deficit throughout the 1980s. The building was leased for independent exhibitions like *Walk On: Six Artists From Scotland* (November 1992) before cautiously reopening the following year under new management. Meanwhile, with debts of £600,000, according to Clare Henry (1991), the TEC also went into liquidation in mid-October 1991. To preserve the building’s use by the cultural sector, the SAC bought an additional share in the property and requested new proposals for its tenancy (Berry, 1994). In May 1992, it was reopened as the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA), ‘and what a sad exchange that has been,’ Oliver (1993, p. 6) later resolved, ‘the place that used to be a hive of activity is now often enough deserted before and after lunchtime.’

Glasgow 1990 and the subsequent recession compounded to profoundly transform the shape of arts funding, expediting the move towards festivalisation—believed to service the creative city strategy—and away from invisible forms of support, the *dark matter* of production, community development and the workshops and tools these required. In May 1991, for instance, Scotland’s largest subsidised studio provider Workshop & Artists Studio Provision

Scotland announced a rental increase ‘of some 200% for most tenants’ (‘Artists Provision?’, 1991, p. 7), claiming that rent had not covered expenditure over the three years prior.

For the moving image, this reorientation of cultural policy was a double-edged sword: on the one hand, the model of festival exhibition was a perfect match for the highly connected, increasingly mobile media; on the other, funding for the production of this most costly artform remained stubbornly out of reach. After two annual rounds, it appears that the SAC’s targeted New Project Scheme was discontinued around 1991. Meanwhile another erstwhile funding source for artists, the Scottish Film Production Fund, grew increasingly distant. Prioritising productions like Ian Sellar’s *Prague* (1992) with a total budget of £2m, into which, Colin McArthur (1993, pp. 30–31) bemoaned, they invested around a quarter of their available funds over two years, the SFPF had ‘lock[ed] on to an industrial model of film-making’ in delirious pursuit of Hollywood success.

In October 1991, SAC support of the SFPF came under scrutiny during consultations for a new national arts strategy, *The Charter for the Arts* (1992), developed under the new SAC director Seona Reid. As reported by *Variant* (‘Moving Image News,’ 1991, p. 8), recommendations were made at one meeting that the c.£34,000 per annum SAC contribution be withdrawn and reallocated towards a specialised Moving Image or Time-Based Media Panel. It was also advised that galleries should be encouraged to set up regular screenings and exhibitions of moving image work, drawing from a shared equipment pool, and that ‘a biennial festival in Scotland could help establish the area on a European scale’ (‘Moving Image News,’ 1991, p. 8). Shown by subsequent annual reports (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1993), the SAC ignored these frustrations in its continued funding of the SFPF beyond the publication of *The Charter*, whilst the call for centralised equipment—all too familiar to prior symposia *The Future of Video in Scotland* (1976) and *Video Day* (1984)—also remained unanswered. The desire for a Scottish moving image biennial, however, was met in *New Visions* the very next year, coming not via a top-down SAC directive but from the self-organising artist community themselves.⁷⁷

In the first years of the 1990s, contrary to global trends, the programming of the established bricks-and-mortar galleries across Scotland can generally be viewed as conservative in approach, unsympathetic therefore to non-traditional practices like artists’ moving image.

⁷⁷ See section 4.3.

Amongst the TEC's last exhibitions was a second solo presentation by Susan Hiller (*Revenants of Time*, March – April 1991), comprising floor-to-ceiling projections over four walls, *An Entertainment* (1990), which amplified and distorted the sensory effects of Punch and Judy puppet theatre to reveal its implicit violence and sexism. This touring show was met with a lukewarm response; Oliver (1991b, p. 37) claimed that its revisionist intention was 'if not quite rubbish, at least, like the work itself, an overstatement.' Following the TEC's liquidation, the new CCA tread lightly, only re-establishing the moving image in its programme post-recession in ambitious undertakings like *New Art in Scotland* (1994).

As longstanding progressive institutions were scrutinised, their buildings in jeopardy, another phenomenon emerged by no small coincidence in artists' temporary occupation of post-industrial spaces across Glasgow. 'Self-initiated activities with exhibitions in abandoned buildings and empty shops and people's flats' became a staple cultural form after *Windfall '91* (July – August 1991), writes Craig Richardson (2011, p. 168). *Windfall* was the collaborative effort of twenty-six artists from Glasgow and across Europe, exhibiting installations, sculpture, text, photography and computer-based work over thirty spaces in the now-demolished Seamen's Mission on the Broomielaw. The project asserted a confident and independent internationalism. Interviewed about it, Douglas Gordon (Gordon, Coley and Boyce, 1991) explained that, with 'no gallery system and seemingly no interest. [...] Up here at the moment, no one's got anything to lose.' In this spirit arose the fomenting of a renewed DIY culture disarticulated from any institution. The many projects which develop within this scene in the following decades pose problems for historical recuperation—rarely accorded press attention and absent from official repositories, many leave scarce evidence, likely eluding this study. Eventually, however, the drifting mantle for institutional moving image exhibition was assumed by Tramway. Through exhibitions like *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), *V-Topia* (1994) and *Trust* (1995), its staff brokered a new interface between local artists, the moving image and its public, becoming the locus for swathes of controversy therein.

4.2 Tramway, 1991–1998

When the dust had settled after Glasgow 1990 and with funding from Glasgow District Council in place, the administration of Tramway transferred from the Festivals Unit to the Department of Performing Arts and Venues, bestowed with greater independence thereupon. As Sarah Lowndes (2010, p. 164) notes, however, the visual arts programme was not automatically reinstated, requiring many months of lobbying before it would again host exhibitions. With Nicola White returning as Visual Arts Officer, in 1992 the programme included exhibitions like *Read My Lips: New York AIDS Polemics* (26 October – 1 December 1992), which articulated an ambitious, international and political conviction about the function of art. The exhibition featured campaign ephemera and artwork by ACT UP, Jenny Holzer, Gran Fury, Keith Haring and David Wojnarowicz amongst others, some already claimed by HIV/AIDS. Felix Gonzalez-Torres' untitled work, meanwhile, an image of an empty bed in tribute to his deceased partner, adorned billboards across the city. These ideas were explicated through an extensive video and seminar programme, involving local activist groups, and a benefit concert headlined by Jimmy Somerville (*Read My Lips*, 1992). *Read My Lips* set a precedence for Tramway's emerging status as an *enfant terrible*, foreshadowing a string of controversies. Questioning whether an exhibition simply obfuscates direct action, Clare Henry (1992) asked, presumptively, 'would its £65,000 budget have been better spent outside the Tramway? Perhaps so.'

4.2.1 24 Hour Psycho (1993)

Later that year, White (quoted in Lowndes, 2010, p. 164) invited Douglas Gordon to develop a major project for the space, 'half expect[ing] him to do something with text.' Proposing instead a large video installation, the offer soon evolved into the landmark work and exhibition *24 Hour Psycho* (24 April – 23 May 1993), establishing Gordon as the posterchild for a new tendency in cinematic projection. Before the exhibition materialised, however, White moved to the CCA to fulfil the new role of Exhibitions Director and was replaced by Charles Esche at Tramway. Inheriting the project, his debut statement as curator, Esche (2020) remembers thinking twice about it: 'does it make sense to just slow down Hitchcock's *Psycho* to twenty-four hours? What does it say?' Doing just that, the resultant work was a simple proposition, described by Erika Balsom (2013a, p. 181) as a *one-liner*, 'matched by an intensity of aesthetic experience that requires no backstory, no artist's statement, and no special knowledge of art history.' A single screen was suspended in the space, viewable from

recto and verso, playing Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) at the rate of approximately two frames per second; the notorious shower murder lasts for forty minutes (Colin, 1993, p. 61). Gordon (quoted in Colin, 1993, p. 61) explained that 'once you've watched it for ten minutes, it takes on a whole life of its own. [...] It's very meditative and I suppose it's opening up the possibility for abstract thought even with a film which is a non-abstract medium.' The work's extraordinary legacy, however, cannot be solely attributed to its elegant premise or the powerful phenomenological effect produced by its slowing. *24 Hour Psycho* was made in the wake Documenta 9 (1992), one year prior. Prominently featuring video installations by Stan Douglas, Gary Hill, Bruce Nauman and Bill Viola and cited as a turning point for the form (Balsom, 2013b, p.36), the exhibition was visited by a number of Glasgow artists: Gordon and Smith/Stewart each remarking on its influence (Richardson, 2011, p.157; Smith, 2020). Partly by design, partly by fortune, I argue, *24 Hour Psycho* has been reconciled as an extension of this moment as it converges with another key attitudinal shift, emblematising both the admission of large-scale digital projection and *Glasgow*—as a hub of untapped artistic production—into the global art discourse and market.

Though supported by the apparatus of video technology, *24 Hour Psycho* was ostensibly a work about time. 'What's important is not what's going on on the screen,' Gordon (quoted in Colin, 1993, p. 61) claimed. Esche (1996, p. 200) explained that Gordon instead,

uses video to explore memory and trance, entertainment and responsibility, action and reaction [...] It is not helped by existing in a separate category of 'video art' and would be diminished if not considered alongside similar work in other media.

In 1995, Steven Bode (2015, p. 66) of Film and Video Umbrella identified Gordon amongst a new generation of artists using video who refused their appellation as video artists, adding, 'it was always quite sobering to discover how little some of them knew, or cared, about video art history.' Notable too is that where many working with video, by choice or necessity, had straddled the exhibition contexts of visual art and film, Gordon was more resolute in solely occupying the gallery, or off-site space, as the optimal condition for display.⁷⁸ Though involved in earlier EventSpace productions, Gordon never once exhibited via its festival-format successor New Visions, unlike contemporaries Smith/Stewart or Gillian Steel. Such absences do not seem incidental. Esche (2020) suggests that for Gordon and his cohort 'there

⁷⁸ According to his professional biography, Gordon first screened at film festivals with the release of his feature *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2006), co-directed with Philippe Parreno (Gagosian, 2018).

wasn't a real desire to connect to another kind of public, a public that was outwith the art field.' This echoes one of the few contemporaneous criticisms of *24 Hour Psycho*:

I do wish exhibition organisers would use common sense and give the public some background information and explanation. Tramway's presentation is a prime example of lack of concern for gallery goers and explains why avant-garde art has such a bad name. (Henry, 1993a).

Gordon's strategic orientation of the work away from a perceived *media ghetto* and towards a target audience immediately garnered favourable attention from specialist and national press, including *Flash Art*, *Frieze*, *Art Monthly*, *The Guardian*, *The Scotsman*, *The Herald* and *Evening Times*, whilst the work has been the subject of numerous academic studies since (Zanger, 2006; Jacobs, 2011; Monteiro, 2016). Arguably eclipsing the myriad antecedent projects which had struggled for such recognition, this coverage might unfairly imply that *24 Hour Psycho* arrived inexplicably and without precedence, belying even Gordon's own long involvement in the artist-led scene. Esche (2020) attributes this reception to Gordon's own 'power of self-promotion and charisma,' though the factors are compound. The exhibition preview, he explains, attracted Nicholas Logsdail, owner of the Lisson Gallery, and critic Stuart Morgan from London, establishing an influential network around the work. Though this validation was symbolic, the exhibition also established a precedence for exchanges between Tramway and European centres, circumventing the system of periphery-centre deference completely. With the support of Klaus Biesenbach, *24 Hour Psycho* toured to Kunst-Werke, Berlin. 'That was very important for Douglas but also for me,' Esche (2020) says, 'because it meant that we could build these relationships directly rather than feeling that you had to go through [...] a London gallery.' In this novel exportation is perhaps the work's most significant contribution to this history.

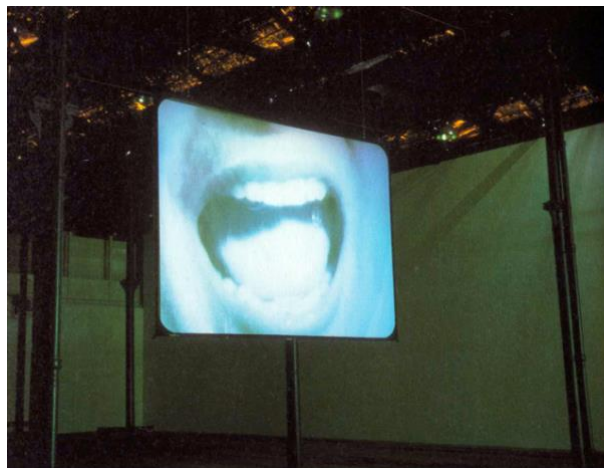


Figure 49: Documentation of Gordon, D. (1993) *24 Hour Psycho* at Tramway, Glasgow. [Photograph].

Tramway began to institutionalise a model of pan-European peer-networking that had developed within the artist-led scene of Transmission and EventSpace since the late 1980s: subsequent exhibitions were co-produced with Moviola, Liverpool (*V-Topia*, 1994) and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (*The Unbelievable Truth*, 1996). Whilst Scotland's official systems and national collections continued to marginalise moving image work, the brokering of an extranational reputation and audience was paramount. The prevailing conservative attitude, despite Gordon's success, is captured in one encounter Esche had with Richard Calvocoressi, then director of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art: 'I went to him and said, "do you think you could buy *24 Hour Psycho*?" Maybe he could buy it for the collection for £5,000 or something, and he almost laughed me out the room' (Esche, 2020). By the late 1990s, it had become a bitter irony that those institutions who failed to collect the work of young Scottish artists could no longer afford to do so (Büchler, 1997, p. 2). In answer to this dilemma, Gordon devised a tongue-in-cheek solution. For the nationwide *GENERATION* (2014) programme, he unified eighty-two moving image works in one vast 101-monitor installation-cum-anthology, *Pretty much every film and video work from 1992 until now* (2014) at the Gallery of Modern Art. A cacophony, stacked in a pile in the centre of the gallery though reminiscent of a flea market or a fly-tip, this unwieldy installation was purchased for the Glasgow Museums collection with assistance from ArtFund, endowing the city with a facsimile of his entire catalogue.

Following *24 Hour Psycho*, Gordon was invited by White to select works for a three-part survey show, *New Art in Scotland* (2 September – 26 November 1994) at the CCA. A successor to the 1989 Smith Biennial, where he had been a prize-winner, *New Art in Scotland* was an open-submission platform pitched at underexposed artists. In this way, it attempted to reconcile a new generation, as White (1994, p. 6) writes, 'to hazard a version, a selection of what is interesting and current.' Its iterations were organised by media, the second accorded to time- and installation-based practices (7–29 October 1994) and drawing together film and video by Alan Currall, Sandrine Rummelhardt, Smith/Stewart. Amongst thirty, these three participants by no means amounted to a sea-change and, as Henry (1994c) duly noted, Duncan of Jordanstone alumni were markedly absent.



Figure 50: Hershman, L. (1992) *A Room of One's Own* in Phoenix Films and Project Ability (1994) *V-Topia: Visions of a Virtual World*. [VHS] Held at: London: Film and Video Umbrella.

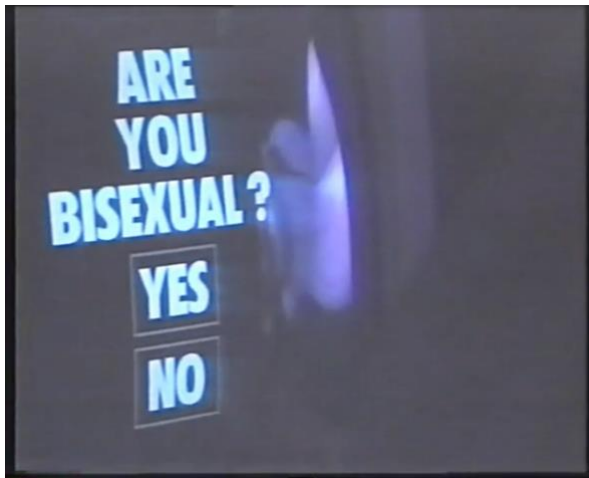


Figure 51: Butler, J. and Butler, P. (1994) *The Dream of Freedom* in Phoenix Films and Project Ability (1994) *V-Topia: Visions of a Virtual World*. [VHS] Held at: London: Film and Video Umbrella.

4.2.2 *V-Topia* (1994) and the problem of new media

Neither *24 Hour Psycho* nor *New Art in Scotland* had sought to resolve the position of the moving image within institutional programming, though Gordon's high-profile provocation had raised certain questions for Tramway. The following year, the sprawling nine-person group show *V-Topia: Visions of a Virtual World* (30 July – 11 September 1994) would delve straight into these themes. Curated by Esche, Bode and Eddie Berg of Moviola, the exhibition premiered at Tramway before touring to the Bluecoat and IKON Gallery. The exhibition comprised new and existing interactive video and computer-based work by artists including the Butler Brothers, Clive Gillman and Lynn Hershman, spread throughout Tramway's darkened main space.⁷⁹ Employing video game aesthetics, interactivity and large multi-screen projection the exhibition redoubled the promise of spectacle offered by *24 Hour Psycho*. Esche (quoted in Ednie, 1994, p. 54) explained that,

V-Topia is a technological show but it's not about technology. It's an art show which aims to question to what extent technology is liberating and living up to its Utopian dream of providing society with unimaginable opportunities, or to what extent it is imprisoning and about control, dangerous sexual politics and de-socialisation.

Hershman's *A Room of One's Own* (1992), for instance, considered voyeurism in the age of CCTV. A domestic installation in miniature comprising a folding chair, single bed, television and rug, is viewed via a movable scope, whilst the eye movements of the viewer-voyeur are tracked. The position of the viewfinder triggers a reactive sequence of pre-recorded scenes, displayed via a small projection, in which a woman—the occupant of this doll's house—confronts the intrusion (Tramway, 1994). Live footage of the viewer's eye is transmitted to the model television, inverting the hierarchy of gaze. In the Butler Brothers' *The Dream of Freedom* (1994), meanwhile, a touch-screen questionnaire simulates a digital home-shopping system of the future that produces an on-demand world inhabited by bunny rabbit surrogates 'in which everything is permitted—provided it occurs in the privacy of your own personal patch of cyberspace' (Tramway, 1994). This customised liberation, however, was ultimately a ruse. As one keen viewer realised:

I watched someone else do it and I was hoping that mine was slightly different because my answers were different but in fact the ending was the same. [...] If you

⁷⁹ The full schedule included: John and Paul Butler, *The Dream of Freedom* (1994); Susan Collins, *Audio Zone* (1994); Graham Ellard and Stephen Johnstone, *Passagen* (1993/1994); Clive Gillman, *To Be This Good... Rock of Ages* (1994); Lynn Hershman, *A Room of One's Own* (1992); Richard Land, *Mirror Images* (1993/1994); and Grahame Weinbren, *Sonata* (1991/1993).

didn't answer questions in a second, it moved on to the next one like it wasn't really listening to you. (Phoenix Films and Project Ability, 1994)

In both cases, viewer fantasy is disrupted by duplicitous technology and in this breakdown the exhibition's intentions are revealed. Though the installations appear to inhabit the popular entertainment forms of arcade, peep show or shopping channel, parodic intervention serves to critique those structures of pleasure and the capitalist-patriarchal desire which underpins them. Whether that social commentary was in fact communicated is another question. In one review, Henry (1994a) asked 'does the content not get lost in the "how it's done" reaction?' Reflecting on the exhibition, Esche (1996, p. 202) found that:

New technology interactive work appeals to a far wider audience than the usual gallery exhibition as can be seen from the 120% increase in Tramway's regular audience figures. [...] From visitor surveys it appears that most people viewed *V-Topia* as both more entertaining and less serious than other Tramway exhibitions.

The exhibition held a certain novelty, heightened by promotional strategies and outreach. 1,000 businesses in Glasgow were faxed an invitation and requested to respond with an image or message, whilst the public were asked to share hopes and dreams forwarded by organisers to those who might be in a position to enable them (*The Herald*, 1994). Through an Internet Relay Chat system, they also streamed the opening allowing users to join from any location, whilst a temporary 'electronic café,' staffed by Charles Sandison and Stephen Hurrell, facilitated a virtual dating agency and offered a video game selection (Henry, 1994a). The exhibition was as much *constituted by* Internet-enabled networking as it was *about* those relations. With a budget of £42,000, *V-Topia* was Tramway's 'major 1994 event' (Henry, 1994a).

Despite its popularity, *V-Topia* was also the site of artistic tensions. Like *24 Hour Psycho*, Malcolm Dickson (2012, p. 151) has offered the view that *V-Topia* 'marked the shift in practice to embracing artists' video and work by artists who used video and film but who would not define themselves as "video artists.'" At the same time, it is productive to locate *V-Topia* at another splitting, between categories of video and emerging *new media* practices, divisible, perhaps, by their respective concerns for critical enquiry and viewer experience. As Catherine Elwes (2015, p. 6) notes elsewhere, 'in the 1990s and into the new millennium, the materiality of film and video was, in some quarters, suppressed in favour of the reification of cinematic and televisual illusionism rendered as ecstatic spectacle.' This lens provides a means of unpicking the exhibition central tension: though purporting to expose the social

systems behind digitally mediated experience, accounts differ on whether that nuance was lost, buried under the *how it's done* illusionism of its theatrical presentation. Erika Balsom (2013b, p. 19) takes a dimmer view of this historical development. Invoking Theodor Adorno, she suggests that the newness of new media was 'inextricably bound up in its commodity character,' adding, 'this spurious novelty is present as the moving image is recruited to provide awe-inspiring fare that will satisfy museum visitors and, in turn, administrators.' By the measure of increased footfall, *V-Topia* complies with this trend.

4.2.3 Teething issues: *Trust* (1995), *Instant* (1996), *Film Culture* (1996)

V-Topia became something of a coda to the institutional practice of isolating film and video media that had proliferated in Scotland since the 1970s. As Esche (2020) remembers, 'for a number of people in my community, there was a lot of critique that I was building up this ghetto. There was a distrust with the focus on technology as the binding medium. I think that *Trust* came out of that sense of distrust of media art.' Tramway's statement exhibition for 1995, *Trust* (7 May – 18 June 1995), then, also formed a treatise for new approaches to exhibition organisation. Selected by a *curatorium* comprising Tramway curators Esche and Katrina Brown alongside Douglas Gordon, Roderick Buchanan, Christine Borland and Jacqueline Donachie, who had each shown at the gallery prior, *Trust* sought to make visible the networks of influence around the group, inviting artists 'on the basis of personal and professional contact' (Tramway, 1995). Its twenty-two participants, whose work spanned three decades, included film- and videomakers Willie Doherty, Tony Oursler, Karen Eslea and Marijke van Warmerdam.

For the artist community of Glasgow, the show brokered encounters with powerful work. Stephanie Smith (2020) remembers being struck by Doherty's video installation, 'it was so simple and pared back, so physical in how you responded to it but also really politically loaded.' For others, the attempt at transparency only revealed the elitism intrinsic to contemporary art. Henry (1995a) led a diatribe against the show, polling locals to equip her view that 'its presentation ignores the punters in favour of an inner circle.' Her concern for the inaccessibility of the work, doubtlessly exacerbated by the proliferation of video, was countered with rebuttals from Esche and the Transmission committee (Esche, 1995a; Ogg, 1995). Tramway responded further with a public forum attended by 150 people, the debate in which garnered front-page coverage and a thirty-minute television special (Esche, 1995b, p. 48). According to Sarah Lowndes (2010, p. 196), this involved conflict between Gordon and

Ken Currie. Despite having earlier renounced painting as bourgeois, turning briefly to film, Currie now decried the omission of traditional media from Tramway's video-heavy programming, penning a condemnation in *Scotland on Sunday* (Lowndes, 2010, p. 196). Accounting for such critiques, Dickson (Byrne and Dickson, 1998, p. 20) has suggested that prolonged disinterest had left the arts establishment unequipped to read video work: 'the aesthetic of video has eluded the critics and journalists because they have been unaware of its presence and history in Scotland—there hasn't been anything that has penetrated that fog to bring all the connection points together.'

With *Trust* and subsequent exhibitions, Tramway pledged itself to artists' video, as an integrated neo-conceptual practice distinguished from parallel experiments in new media. By 1995 the two practices had formed quite separate ecologies. 'Completely different orbits,' as Bode (2015, pp. 65–66) then explained, 'on the one hand, you had a number of art-world approved (mostly conceptual) artists [...]. On the other, you had the new media crew, with their expensive PowerBooks and their indefatigably utopian activist agenda.' In Scotland, this division was supported by the emergence of a new infrastructure in which agencies like Suspect Culture (1993–2009), Theatre Cryptic (1994–) and Tramway's own multidisciplinary *Dark Lights* (1995–2003) strand, adopting the tell-tale model of theatre companies, took custody of commissioning new media events and installations, often under the premise of *fusing* performance, visual art and music.

It is important to note, however, that the polarisation of conceptual and new media practices hadn't arrive fully-formed, and that any emphatic categorisation risks disguising a more hybrid reality, comprising productive anomalies. In its first edition, for instance, *Dark Lights* included exhibitions by Jonathan Monk, John Shankie and Smith/Stewart amongst its programme of physical theatre, dance, music and discussions (Roth, 1995, p. 95). Alongside Gordon, Neil Mulholland (2009, pp. 20) credits Monk and Smith/Stewart specifically with leading Scotland to become 'internationally acknowledged for black-box video installation.' And, like Gordon, Smith/Stewart refused their denomination as *video artists*: 'we always felt that the work was much more about communication, sculpture, performance,' Smith (2020) tells me, reflecting on their early collaborations.



Figure 52: Documentation of Smith/Stewart (1995) *Sustain*. [Photograph].

At Tramway (17–25 September 1995), the duo showed two double-projection installations: their first collaboration *Intercourse* (1993), and *Sustain* (1995). In the former, one mouth summons enough saliva to spit into the other, crossing the frame, shot close with amplified audio in a simple disgust-inducing loop. *Sustain*, meanwhile, features a vertical diptych: a woman covers a male torso in love bites, and a man holds his breath underwater, intermittently fed air, mouth-to-mouth, by a woman. Both concern the mouth, an erogenous zone and threshold capable of conferring pain, pleasure and life. Unlike previous video installations, however, Smith/Stewart’s work met the approval of the Scottish press. A dominant voice at this time, Henry (1995b) declared that ‘although I hate art video in general (out of focus, self-indulgent, and so boring), [Smith/Stewart] have won me round. I would go so far as to say their brilliant video called *Intercourse* is the best I’ve ever seen.’

The following year, Smith/Stewart exhibited a companion work, *Mouth to Mouth* (1995)—recording the same action of a woman feeding air to a submerged man, viewed from another angle—in another Tramway project: *Instant* (10 February – 24 March 1996).⁸⁰ Devised by the same trio behind *V-Topia* and extending its enquiry into the exhibitionary potential of digital space, *Instant* comprised a touch-screen monitor with a scratchcard-like interface, where the viewer could uncover six video works at random, each between thirty seconds and four minutes.⁸¹ Compact and portable, the ‘exhibition’ toured venues including Camden Arts

⁸⁰ The work was originally made for a domestic exhibition, displayed on a black and white CCTV monitor outside of a bathroom, suggesting a live feed from inside the room.

⁸¹ The works included: Roderick Buchanan, *Sodastream* (1995); Michael Curran, *Sentimental Journey* (n.d.); Yael Feldman, *Je Reviens Bientot* (1995); Smith/Stewart, *Mouth to Mouth* (1995); Jane and Louise Wilson, *Insert* (n.d.); John Wood and Paul Harrison, *Boat* (1994).

Centre, London, and the Bluecoat. The selection prioritised high-impact, performance-oriented work that claimed to ‘offset the illusion of instant access / instant gratification apparently promised by new technology with a series of vivid visual reminders of the enduring, inescapable presence of physical reality’ (Film and Video Umbrella, 1995).

Alongside Smith/Stewart, Glasgow-based Roderick Buchanan presented his video *Sodastream* (1995). A hand drops a glass bottle of soda, it shatters upon meeting the concrete floor, momentarily spraying vibrant colour across the frame (Buchanan, 1995). Repeating this action, each bottle a different flavour and colouring, the work transforms these vernacular artefacts, first viewed in profile, into ephemeral works of abstract expressionism, shot from above, the perspective flattened. Like *V-Topia*, *Instant* purported to satirise its own display systems—here, the instantaneous delivery offered by digital services like teleshopping or online gambling. Whether this aim was achieved is perhaps less interesting than the particular form of practice consolidated by its selection. Across the works, the ‘one-liner’ approach, summoned by Balsom in her description of *24 Hour Psycho*, proliferated via the reoccurrence of simple process-led actions. Notably absent from this selection, however, were the socio-political impulses which some claim differentiated Glasgow artists from their YBA contemporaries.

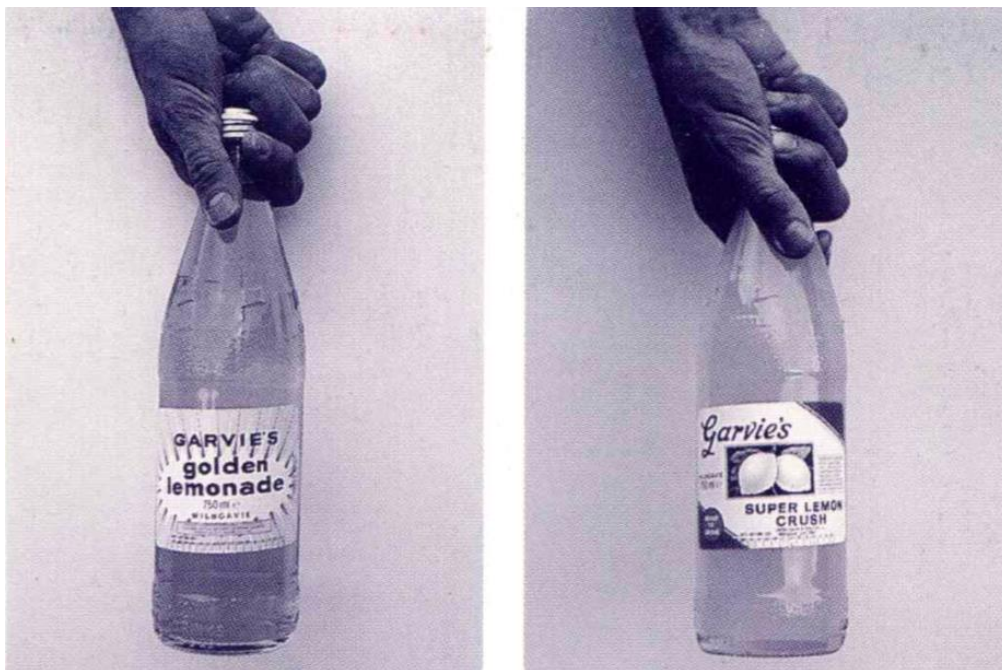


Figure 53: Production stills for Buchanan, R. (1995) *Sodastream* in Film and Video Umbrella (1995) *Instant*. [Brochure] Courtesy of Charles Esche.

Tramway's years-long enquiry into the changing interface of visual arts and film was ostensibly concluded with an exhibition developed to coincide with the centenary of cinema: *Film Culture* (15 September – 20 October 1996). A three-part project, *Film Culture* featured the Scottish premiere of Bruce McLean's feature-length three-screen 'cultural war movie' (*The Herald*, 1996a) *Urban Turban* (1994/1997) which reimagined 'the art world as a parade of inane stances and outlandish headwear' (Perry, 2014); an imageless projection by the French artist-filmmaker Pierre Bismuth; and a group of anti-films by Canadian artist Mark Lewis. *Film Culture*, Esche (2020) says, 'was about the idea of film being a reference point [...] as a background to all of our lives, from when we were born, in a sense having more reality, more connection with film than with the lilies in Monet's garden.' Bismuth's *Blind Film* (1996) comprised a running projector, emitting a soundtrack but no image, compelling the viewer to construct their own narrative; 'the ultimate non-concept,' in Henry's (1996a) view. For Esche (2020), there was a humour to the piece within the context of that space's exhibition history, 'it was kind of a version of *24 Hour Psycho* that didn't really work.' Lewis meanwhile offered a series of vignettes: *Two Impossible Films* (1995), which revisited two abandoned film projects—Samuel Goldwyn's *The Story of Psychoanalysis* and Sergei Eisenstein's *Das Kapital*—envisioning an opening sequence for each; and *A Sense of the End* (1996), which collaged tropes of genre cinema endings, all shot in Glasgow (Smith, 1996, p. 63). Extricating form from any sense of story, Lewis reveals the means through which emotion is signified. Following the analogous blockbuster exhibition *Spellbound: Art and Film* (Hayward Gallery, 22 February – 6 May 1996)—which prominently featured *24 Hour Psycho*—*Film Culture* advanced an acknowledgement and celebration of the ubiquity of the moving image in contemporary artistic practices; it was also a statement of irretractability, that a separation of visual arts and film was untenable.

Film and video continued to feature in Tramway's programme into the late 1990s, including a video-laden presentation by Marina Abramovic and Ulay (1998), though courted less controversy as the moving image proliferated across institutions big and small. After refusing the offer of *24 Hour Psycho*, for instance, National Galleries Scotland made their first moving image acquisition in 1998: Smith/Stewart's two-screen installation *Breathing Space* (1997) (Meehan, 2019). The extent of this conservatism is made particularly striking upon comparison with Tate, having acquired their first videotapes in 1972 (Horowitz, 2014, p. 48)

and first video installation in 1984 (Tate Gallery, 1988).⁸² Esche left Tramway in 1997 and in 1998, following receipt of a National Lottery award, the venue closed for redevelopment, relocating its programming to temporary locations throughout the city for two years in a series dubbed Tramway@. From its first adaptation as an exhibition space in 1990 until its closure in 1998, Tramway offers an unmatched study in the shifting curatorial negotiation of film and video as it happened in Scotland. As many have asserted, however, the gallery also promoted a narrow field of neoconceptual practice to the omission of philosophies and forms which refused to cooperate with its particular articulation of artists' film and video: cinematic, spectacular and increasingly apolitical. For those practitioners, alternative support was found in the parallel development of specialist festivals.

⁸² Gilbert and George, *A Portrait of the Artists as Young Men* (1970); *In the Bush* (1972); and *Gordon's Makes Us Drunk* (1972); Susan Hiller, *Belshazzar's Feast, the Writing on Your Wall* (1983–1984).

4.3 The rise and fall of New Visions, 1992–2000

Following Glasgow 1990, EventSpace returned to its initial focus on film and video.⁸³

Revived within the new political context of Euroscepticism which had defined Margaret Thatcher's last term, Malcolm Dickson and Doug Aubrey's development of a new platform satisfied pan-European ambitions beyond mere engagement with the moving image. 'The culmination of our activities,' Dickson (1992b) explains, the first New Visions International Festival of Film and Video (1–9 April 1992) was the result of compound desires. It came, he writes, 'at a pivotal moment: the re-shaping of the world political map, the demise of the Communist States and their re-colonisation by global capital, the UK "entering" into Europe and increasing awareness of independence in Scotland.' Adding, 'we were neither interested in a "video art festival" or in a film festival "proper" as is commonly experienced.

Distinctions between amateur and professional, the mainstream and the experimental are often constructs serving the interests of elites.' In this way, the festival identified itself within a markedly post-convergence moment, where distinctions between media no longer felt productive. In organisers' evocation of *constructs*, they also offer a political reading of moving image categories, employing a Marxian understanding of disciplinary boundaries as a bourgeois obfuscation. Much like Dickson's other enterprise, *Variant*, then, New Visions should be understood as both an artistic and (leftist) political platform.

Though the programme of over 200 works reflected this intersection, it was not led by themes. Submission guidelines invited 'all film and video works, irrespective of format, genre or year of origin,' requesting only that the material be 'new to Scotland' (EventSpace, 1991b). These submissions formed a core strand titled *International Zeitgeist*, which comprised nine programmes shown at the Glasgow Film Theatre and Goethe-Institut featuring a mix of video, 16mm and Super 8 work by artist-filmmakers including John Smith, Angela Melitopoulos, Annette Kennerley and local residents like Elsie Mitchell and Ann Vance. Transmission hosted Hungarian artist Gábor Császari's opening night installation *L.S.D.* (c.1992), involving a slit-shutter camera and self-built projector, and housed a temporary videotheque thereafter.

A focus on political documentary, *Communities of Resistance*, surveyed the role of video as an activist instrument in the Global North, featuring Trade Films' *The Miners' Campaign*

⁸³ Initially with a series of screenings at the Goethe-Institut dubbed *TX* in 1991.

Tapes (1984), Variant Video's *Workers City* (1989), Dara Birnbaum's *Take Back the Night* (1990) and a profile of London-based guerrilla video group Despite TV. Shown in the imminent context of the 1992 general election, the final screening was interspersed with live broadcast of the results. Specific geographic focuses were also accorded to Norway, Denmark, Hungary, Switzerland, Australia, Slovenia and Germany, variously funded by diplomatic organisations including the British Council, Danish Cultural Institute, Royal Norwegian Consulate and the Goethe-Institut. At either end of the festival's range were programmes dedicated to the punk ethic in film and video, mostly emanating from Berlin, and *Computer World*, a package of thirty computer-generated videos by John Butler, Simon Biggs and John Latham amongst others (EventSpace, 1992). David Hall received a two-part retrospective, presented by Anna Ridley, though an earlier despatch also teased an equivalent tribute to Margaret Tait, which seemingly failed to materialise (EventSpace, 1991a).



Figure 54: EventSpace (1991) *New Visions: Guidelines for Submissions*. Courtesy of Paula Larkin.

Though the first edition largely eluded Scottish arts criticism, Dickson mobilised *Variant* as a promotional platform, publishing a supplementary issue which featured an interview with Despite TV (Dickson, 1992a), a profile of David Hall (O'Pray, 1992), alongside essays on video from Slovenia and the burgeoning field of virtual reality. Though a companion to the programme, it made strangely little mention of the festival itself. Dickson (2020) explains that they 'didn't go hell bent for leather to promote New Visions in *Variant*.' EventSpace, he adds, had adopted a policy of not promoting their own artistic practices as an 'attempt to keep critical distance for the sake of a certain impartiality.' The institution of curatorial ethics here is perhaps indicative of a professionalisation that had begun to structure the artist-led scene.

In 1990, *Variant* was awarded development funding on the condition that they sought consultation and formulated a business plan, leading to a new look and enhanced production quality.⁸⁴ This reshaping, often to the appeasement of funders, had considerable implications for cultural workers, regimenting interdisciplinary practices so that artists-*cum*-organisers might prioritise one commitment over the other. Coincident with planning for New Visions, Dickson (2020), for instance, tells me he stopped making his own artworks. This kind of martyrdom didn't go unnoticed, however. Amongst praise for the punk programmes and the equitable representation of women's work in perhaps the only substantive review of the festival—unsurprisingly published in *Variant*—Louise Crawford (1992, p. 49) opined that, 'it was unfortunate that a day or evening of Scottish work was not programmed. Local makers need to learn to prioritise themselves more instead of continually relegating themselves to the lower ranks and back seats of international platforms.'

The first edition of New Visions was funded by the SAC, Glasgow District Council and Scottish Film Council, though operated on voluntary labour (Vance, 2020). In its first year Dickson and Aubrey enlisted support from Transmission committee alumni Ann Vance, Gillian Steel, Euan Sutherland and Billy Clark, alongside past organisers of the Fringe Film Festival, Edinburgh (FFF), Louise Crawford and Nicola Percy, amongst others (EventSpace, 1992). New Visions' development as a hybrid of these sources—Glasgow art scene and independent film sector—perhaps comes as no surprise.

Recurring annually, the FFF (1984–1991) was focused on low-budget independent filmmaking, somewhat filling a gap in provision left upon Edinburgh International Film Festival's reinvention in the early 1980s as a blockbuster event. By 1989, the four-day event ranged from Welsh Sci-Fi to gay interest programming (Fringe Film Festival, 1989), adopting a relaxed policy in which, coordinator Graham Henderson (quoted in Burnet, 1989, p. 24) explained, 'everything entered is shown [...] There is no sense of competition, no threshold of quality, no direction we would approve or not approve of.' This philosophy lent the festival a certain reputation, described by arts journalist Thom Dibdin (1990, p. 18) as 'chaotic and disorganised.' Crawford joined the FFF in 1989 and oversaw its extension beyond theatrical screenings to include expanded cinema (Byrne and Dickson, 1998, p. 20). By 1990, following 'six years wandering in an experimental wilderness largely of its own

⁸⁴ Sarah Lowndes (2010, p. 190) notes that by 1995 Transmission had similarly altered their policies to exclude active committee members from exhibiting, engendering 'a more critically detached curatorial attitude.'

making' (Dibdin, 1990, p. 18), underfunded and without a permanent office or venue, the FFF introduced installation, slide and Super 8 work under the new direction of Vivienne Smith. Following another staff change, Percy brought video into its remit in 1991, reflected in the festival's renaming as the Fringe Film & Video Festival (FFVF, 1991–1996). The programme expanded from ninety works in 1989 to 118 in 1991 (Burnet, 1989, p. 24; Morrison, 1991, p. 14). Between 1990 and 1995, attendance figures also grew from 573 to 1,360 (Positive Solutions, 1997, p. 7). Despite these empirical successes, the FFVF was consistently beleaguered by financial insecurity: three months before the 1992 edition, after two failed funding applications, the FFVF had to be 'saved' by a last-minute grant of £3,500 from the Edinburgh District Council (*The List*, 1992, p. 4).

Though the FFVF's precarity—most acute during the recession—was well reported, New Visions, perhaps despite appearances, tread on similarly unstable ground, underwritten by the possibility of an unpaid labour force afforded by access to a benevolent welfare state and the receipt of unemployment benefits. As Vance (2020) remembers, 'occasionally we would get a one-off payment but not much, £50 here or there. Not enough to sustain us. So, there was the dole and that was the done thing.' The extent to which welfare schemes subsidised the Glasgow art scene at this time is significant. In 1992, for instance, curator Patricia Fleming founded Fuse, a studio initiative and registered Employment Action Scheme funded via the Glasgow Development Agency. This offered artists employment status, free studio space, materials and exhibition opportunities, adding £20 per week to their benefits (Henry, 1993). Film- and videomakers who participated in this scheme included Anne-Marie Copestake, Douglas Gordon, Jonathan Monk, Stephanie Smith, James Thornhill of Claire Fontaine, and Sarah Tripp (Smith, 2020; Fleming, 2021). The project manifest four acclaimed exhibitions by 1997 when Fleming opened Fly, a permanent space on Duke Street, latterly Market Gallery.⁸⁵ Supported by the SAC and the Foundation for Sport and the Arts (FSA), these busy showcases included experiments in video and conceptual work amongst traditional media, offering a platform for artists to sell work. Fleming (2021) doubts that any moving image work was sold directly though the exhibitions attracted arts professionals *en masse*, coincident with growing market interest in artists like Gordon and Monk. Fuse supported c.500 artists in this way until 1999 (Patricia Fleming Projects, 2020) and is often cited for its transformative effect: asked how Smith/Stewart sustained themselves, Smith (2020)

⁸⁵ At the Collins Gallery (1993), Atlantic Quay (1993), The Italian Centre (1994) and McLellan Galleries (1996) (Henry, 1993, 1994b, 1997).

remembers that ‘Fuse filled a gap for people; rather than you being hounded [...] you could actually say, well, “I’m practising as an artist” [...] and be able to!’ Artist Lucy McKenzie also explains that when she graduated in 1999,

You could get a studio and come in and sign on once a month and you would be considered looking for work, [...] then you could go abroad. It was amazing. I did that for a year and then got my first solo show and began my professional life where I could sustain myself.

This changing socio-economic context was reflected in the programme of the second New Visions festival (4–8 May 1994). Aubrey had left the core organising team, now helmed by Dickson and Vance, and New Visions had effectively subsumed the work of EventSpace, becoming a year-round promoter in its own right. This edition was funded via a £6,000 grant from the SAC with additional support from the SFC, FSA, Goethe-Institut and Glasgow District Council (‘A new vision,’ 1994, p. 25). Commensurate with professionalisation trends, its polemical language was softened—references to *capital* and *self-determination* exchanged for *free-thinking*, *gathering* and *dialogue* (Dickson and Vance, 1994). A concerted response to the dearth of commissioning opportunities for artists, and to Crawford’s critique of martyrdom, the festival introduced a strand ‘meant to complement the main programme [...] by extending the notion of those mediums beyond that of the cinematic and televisual experience to that of audio-visual installation and projection, both within and beyond gallery spaces’ (New Visions, 1994b). Projects by Scotland-based artists Alice Angus and Charles Sandison, Louise Crawford and Stéphan Guéneau, Peter McCaughey, Ewan Morrison, Ben Skea and Gillian Steel variously dispersed monitors across the city centre and introduced projection to public spaces including a Scott Street gable end, a Cowcaddens underpass and an Indian restaurant in Finnieston.

McCaughey’s contribution, *Borrowed Lights (Stage 1)* (1994), reimagined the glass block paving widely installed to filter light into tenement basements as a suite of readymade screens (New Visions, 1994a). Projecting found footage onto the street from below, the project was as much about the negotiation of access to private property—Mother India, Coral Bookmakers, Williamson’s Photographers—as it was an intervention in public space. *Borrowed Lights* also formed a preparatory experiment for a later collaboration with Stephen Skrynka, *The Festival of Borrowed Light* (24 March – 4 April 1996), which replicated the premise over thirty-six sites including the Bank of China, Variety Bar and The Griffin. The revised installation additionally featured new glass inlays, filled with ‘gurgling coloured

light,' objects set in resin or food-dyed water; honey bees; dried anchovies; sound elements; and kinetic devices triggered by movement (Henry, 1996).

By 1994, McCaughey was developing a reputation for exploiting projection's theatrical character to transform public space. On the evening following the demolition of the notorious Hutchesontown C Flats in the Gorbals the year prior, he orchestrated a ten-screen projection onto an adjacent old mill building. Interviews with residents and footage of the gelignite explosion—debris from which had tragically killed one spectator—recorded only eight hours earlier by fourteen different cameras were edited into a one-off fifteen-minute work, described by Crawford (1994, p. 11) as 'one of the most stimulating visual arts events seen in Glasgow in recent months.' This form of spectacular projection-based practice culminated in McCaughey's two-part project *Coming Soon* (10–19 December 1999) and *Arc* (18–19 December 1999) on the façade and within an auditorium, respectively, of the disused ABC Cinema on Sauchiehall Street, though commissioned via Tramway@ (Tramway, 1999). Closed to the public only weeks earlier, the building's future was then precarious. *Coming Soon* salvaged the apparatus of cinema architecture—backlit poster panels, marquee and lettering—to display photography from the projection booth, exposing the drab environs from which fantasy materialises. *Arc*, as Ross Sinclair (2000) described, led viewers 'through a side fire-exit, which necessitated a disorienting, subterranean crawl through the "backstage" of labyrinthine passages,' to an auditorium, with seats uncannily ripped out, where McCaughey's 70mm film 'presented a flying sweep around the building itself, shot from high above the city in a lyrical arc which ended the loop above the cinema where it began.'

Elsewhere at New Visions 1994, Steel's *Remarkable Pages* (1994) at The Glasgow School of Art offered a tableau for the viewer's discovery, comprising a two-screen film projection, desk and notebook filled with diary entries, drawings and photographs of a character named Pina Lees. These materials record this semiautobiographical proxy's thirty days prior to the festival, revealing the interior 'tragicomic experience' of a participating artist (New Visions, 1994a). *Remarkable Pages* was produced through an SAC Time-Based Media Award (TBMA) granted to further Steel's 'exploration of film as a powerful trigger to the viewer's imagination' (New Visions, 1994a). Launched that year, the TBMA was a seemingly short-lived scheme, eluding records post-1994, but inheriting and advancing upon the resource made available by earlier initiatives.

Friday, 29 April 1994

£6,000 for art of a lavatorial nature

By Eric McKenzie

THOUSANDS of pounds of taxpayers' money has been spent on an art show which consists of a men's lavatory cubicle and a prison cell with lavatory bowl — both with peep-holes.

The video presentation of *Closet*, planned for next week at Glasgow's Centre for Contemporary Art in Sauchiehall Street, is by a Glasgow artist who received a £6,000 award from the Scottish Arts Council.

The Tory group leader on Glasgow District Council, Councillor Bill Aitken, said yesterday that the event was a ludicrous spectacle and distasteful nonsense.

"It is not so much a prison cell that should be involved in this performance but more a padded cell which should be occupied by those who threw public money at this ludicrous spectacle."

The artist, Ewan Morrison, 25, who was unavailable for comment, has said his intention was to provoke questions on the differences and similarities between police surveillance and male sexual voyeurism.

An SAC spokesman said yesterday: "We consider things purely on their artistic merit when we decide whether or not to finance them."

Figure 55: Extract from McKenzie, E. (1994) '£6,000 for art of a lavatorial nature,' *The Scotsman*, 29 April. Courtesy of Paula Larkin.

The production of artist-turned-writer Ewan Morrison's *Closet* (1994) was supported by the same award. Receiving a reported £6,000 (Villiers, 1994), the TBMA marked a considerable advance upon the funding available to individuals via schemes like the Visual Arts Video Bursary in 1986/1987. *Closet* comprised a two-screen video at the CCA juxtaposing the formally similar environments of prison cell and public bathroom, particularly as used by gay men in the solicitation of sex: 'both are lined with white tiles, both have a toilet bowl and a peep-hole. Both exist in a long line of identical enclosures. One has a lock on the inside, the other on the outside' (New Visions, 1994a). Offering a correlation between carceral surveillance and erotic voyeurism, the installation breached the Scottish media's longstanding indifference to artists' video in attracting reactionary, homophobic attention. In one scandal-mongering article, Eric McKenzie (1994) reproduced Conservative Councillor Bill Aitken's view that 'it is not so much a prison cell that should be involved in this performance but more a padded cell which should be occupied by those who threw public money at this ludicrous spectacle.' In the hostile climate of Section 28 which prohibited the *promotion of homosexuality* by local authorities from 1988 to 2000 (in Scotland), *Closet* was amongst a number of projects hounded in this way, routinely framed as vulgar misappropriations of *taxpayers' money*. Morrison acknowledged the influence of theatre company DV8's provocative *MSM* (1993), men who have sex with men, which centred the gay men's practice of *cottaging* (Villiers, 1994). When *MSM* was staged in Bristol, Conservative Councillor Ken Blanchard, shadow chairman of the city's Equalities and Community Development committee, protested 'we owe it to the community to ensure this sort of thing is not being encouraged' (Orange, 1993). The year after *Closet*, whilst resident at the CCA, HIV-positive

artist Ron Athey performed *Four Scenes in a Harsh Life* (3–4 March 1995), which involved self-mutilation and the controlled use of hypodermic needles. Meeting the tabloid ire, the work was dubbed ‘a sick show’ by an ‘ex-junkie’ and ‘self-confessed gay,’ reason again to call into question the ‘trendy’ gallery’s council subsidy (Ferguson, 1995). It is important therefore to contextualise the fact of *Closet*’s production as in itself politically resistant and, by association, to see the SAC’s support thereof as a progressive action.



Figure 56: D. Garcia of Amsterdam Translocal Network interviewed within one of E. Sutherland and M. Pawson’s *Virtual Living Rooms* in Scottish Television (1994) *Don’t Look Down*. United Kingdom: Scottish Television. Courtesy of Malcolm Dickson.

Alongside its installations, the festival comprised a simplified and extended core of seventeen *International Zeitgeist* screenings spread across the CCA, GFT and GSA’s Mackintosh Lecture Theatre. Moving image by international artists Sophie Calle, Bruce Conner, Sarah Pucill and Peter Tscherkassky were amongst the 150 works screened (New Visions, 1994a). The focus on political documentary remained but was accorded a bespoke viewing environment, *Virtual Living Rooms*, at the CCA: two domestic interiors recreated in the lurid patterns of warning insignia by Euan Sutherland and Mark Pawson. Distinct from the detached black box or white cube, this installation sought to invoke a conscious connection with contemporary lived experience. Parodying the living room as a site of information, disinformation, newsreel and entertainment consumption, the space sought to dislodge the viewer from their complacency to the televisual flow. For their consideration were video packages concerning the conflict in Sarajevo, the Gulf War, and the New World Order conspiracy. Lastly, a schedule of talks and presentations brought together radical media projects from across Europe. These included Amsterdam Translocal Network, a coalition of

citizen broadcasters using public access cable to experiment in participatory television; London-based Digital Deviance who were exploring the use of computer technology in the ‘creation and consumption of oppositional imagery’; and Van Gogh TV who had produced the *Piazza Virtuale* (1992), an interactive television programme at Documenta 9. (New Visions, 1994a).

Though not always in the way expected, New Visions 1994 captured the imagination of mainstream media. Aside from the scandal of its gay representation, the festival was profiled on STV’s late-night cultural magazine programme *Don’t Look Down*, presented by Janice Forsyth, though organisers felt that coverage ‘had been adequate rather than enthusiastic’ (‘A new vision,’ 1994, p. 25). Ironically, one outlet the festival failed to reach was its allied magazine *Variant*. Following its spring 1994 issue, *Variant*’s £21,000 p.a. funding was withdrawn by the SAC resulting in its closure to widespread protest (‘The Beast that Would Not Die,’ 1996, p. 1). With just £3,000 in advertising revenue and a revised low-cost format, the magazine was relaunched in 1996 under the editorship of Leigh French and Billy Clark, distributed freely via arts venues (Beaumont, 1996, p. 90). The intervening years, however, leave a noticeable gap in critical attention, to the particular detriment of non-traditional artistic practices.

After 1994, New Visions continued to develop and diversify its support for artists’ moving image beyond exhibition. In summer 1995, they began to publish a quarterly newsletter, *Infosource*, that shared updates, opportunities and listings specifically for a Scotland-based community of practice. ‘To our knowledge there is no other one forum for this,’ its introduction noted (New Visions, 1995a). Dickson (2020) explains that ‘this was all about promoting a more altruistic way of working, [...] to stimulate a more critical and active environment around the medium.’ In providing an index of resources, *Infosource* partly answered the decades-long refrain that equipment and communication be better joined up. That year, New Visions coordinated *Scottish Zeitgeist* screenings at Street Level; three matinée *CaféKulture* events at Cottiers Theatre; Super 8 showcases at the Glasgow Film & Video Workshop; and packages from the European Media Art Festival at the Goethe-Institut (The List, 1995b, p. 23; New Visions, 1995b).

A significant development was their contribution to the second edition of the Fotofeis Scottish International Festival of Photography (1995), a nationwide month-long biennial. The festival was particularly notable for its activity beyond the central belt, reaching galleries,

libraries and leisure centres across Stornoway, Greenock, Elgin, Nairn, Thurso and Unst (Foster, Gill and McArthur, 1995). In Glasgow, solo presentations were accorded to Allan Sekula (*Fish Story*, Tramway, Glasgow 6 October – 12 November 1995) and, significantly, to Scottish-Ghanaian artist Maud Sulter (*Alba*, CCA Glasgow, 23 September – 28 October 1995), then resident in England. Perhaps better known for her work in photography, poetry and criticism, in the 1990s Sulter introduced audio and video installation to her practice. *Alba* featured an audio work, comprising music; readings of her collection, *The Alba Sonnets*, in which a Black Scottish history is summoned through the figures of ‘Blak Elene’ and ‘Blak Margaret’ found in the court records of James IV (Mabon, 1998; Cherry, 2015); and ‘the plaintive, ceremonial sound of the mmenson horn used in West Africa to call ancestral spirits into the present’ (Cherry, 1998, p. 13). In its CCA iteration, the exhibition also included her video *Plantation* (1994), earlier shown at University Gallery, Leeds (18 January – 24 March 1995). Featuring graphic footage of the artist’s own Female Reconstructive Surgery juxtaposed with layers of text and sequences from film adaptations of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), the projection invoked the maligned character of Bertha Antoinette Mason to critique the ongoing, racist association of Blackness and hysteria. Sulter made another video, *My Father’s House* (1997), shown in a namesake exhibition at her own short-lived London gallery, Rich Women of Zurich, in 1999. A document of the three-day funeral of her Ghanaian father, an eye doctor and village chief with whom she had little contact, *My Father’s House* presents an experience of cultural hybridity and alienation through a home video aesthetic (Fatona *et al.*, 2006, no pagination). Sulter’s contribution to artistic and critical developments in Scotland has arguably only been realised posthumously; further research is necessitated to uncover the full extent of her later moving image work.⁸⁶

Addressing Fotofeis’s themes of mortality, migration and the city, meanwhile, New Visions developed three film and video packages with the support of Cinenova, London Electronic Arts (LEA, formerly LVA) and the LMFC (New Visions, 1995c). Recognising that ‘distribution and regular screenings are generally limited to Edinburgh and Glasgow,’ the tour promised to take work ‘to urban and rural venues throughout Scotland’ (Foster, Gill and McArthur, 1995, p. 28). *Mortality* included Crawford’s *Claiming Territory* (1994) amongst an international selection; *Diaspora* featured Shafeeq Vellani’s *Darwish* (1994), Mandy

⁸⁶ Sulter’s archive is currently in development with an Art360 Foundation award (2019–) which supports legacy management in order to better make bodies of work visible to the public. Ongoing initiatives by Mother Tongue, Rhubaba and the Glasgow Women’s Library are also working to better reconcile her myriad outputs.

McIntosh's *Donkey Skin* (1995) and Emma Davie's *Seaview* (1995); whilst *Urban Myths* presented the Butler Brothers' animation *The City is No Longer Safe* (1994) and Tanya Syed's *Salamander* (1994). The very same month, New Visions hosted the first Scottish screening of Daniel Reeves' *Obsessive Becoming* (1990–1995) and a double bill of Canadian filmmaker Bruce LaBruce's erotic feature *Super 8 and a Half* (1994) and Angela Hans Sheirl, Ursula Purrer and Dietmar Schipek's lesbian sci-fi set in the year 2700, *Flaming Ears* (1992) for the city's LGBT festival, Glasgay (1993–2014) (New Visions, 1995d).

Dickson left New Visions and *Variant* to take on the directorship of Street Level Photoworks in late 1995. Vance and Paula Larkin, who had overseen PR in 1994, assumed the role of co-organisers for the third and final biennial edition (11 October – 10 November 1996). Truly vast, New Visions 1996 comprised thirteen *International Zeitgeist* programmes; a reprisal of the virtual living room, designed by Martha McCulloch; a retrospective of Tina Keane's film and video work; historical focuses on the early German avant-garde, The Glasgow School of Art Kinecraft Society and, from New York, the Cinema of Transgression. Laura Hudson curated a programme, *Subterranean Speech*, on the poetics of experimental cinema. German choreographer Gabrielle Staiger undertook a residency followed by a presentation of the results. Works were commissioned to screen at every intermission, differing between venues. Site-specific projects were installed at St. Enoch Subway Station and on Sauchiehall Street windows. Elsewhere, a late-night internet café hosted an online and in-person soap opera, karaoke and virtual banquet, *Untogether* (1996), presented by Elevator (artist duo Lindsay Perth and Simon Yuill). At Project Ability, residents of the notoriously troubled Lennox Castle Hospital, with Iain Piercy and Inigo Garrido, presented 'the first ever installation in Scotland of film and video work made by people with learning difficulties.' And, with a new ally in post, Street Level Photoworks co-commissioned installations by Keane, Stephen Hurrell, Keith Stutter and Dutch duo Sluik/Kurpershoek's CD project, *Matria Europa* (1996), with LEA and Hull Time Based Arts (New Visions, 1996). Perhaps counter to its early populist reputation, at the newly opened Gallery of Modern Art eight CD-based projects, both 'commercial multimedia and underground,' were available for exploration in the Fire Gallery alongside a looping programme of single-screen film and video. New Visions 1996 seemingly disrupted the longstanding disinterest of the press, reaching *The Scotsman*, *The Herald*, *The List*, *i-D*, *Mute* and the rebooted *Variant*, not least for its dalliance in the new, virtual space of the Internet. Especially prescient, projects like *Untogether* were singled out for their novelty; interviewed for one article, Yuill (quoted in Welsh, 1996) explained that

‘the interesting thing is the relationship between the virtual and the real. [...] Untogether exaggerates some of these points of contact.’



Figure 57: The Computer Workshop in the Fire Gallery at the Gallery of Modern Art (c.1996–1998). [35mm slides] Held at: Glasgow Museums Resource Centre. Courtesy of Katie Bruce.

Alexandra-Maria Colta and María Vélez-Serna (2019), whose writing constitutes one of very few engagements with artists’ film and video exhibition in Glasgow in the 1990s, offer that that New Visions’ three festivals specifically provided a ‘platform to marginalised artists who had no chance at distribution and exhibition via mainstream channels.’⁸⁷ Speaking to its promotion of uncategorisable, interstitial forms of cultural practice—only heightened in its latter facilitation of CD- and Internet-based projects—I add that the festival also began to achieve a diversity of representation that had rarely entered the concern of its predecessors, foreground queer, ethnic minority and working-class experiences in particular. Colta and Vélez-Serna also conclude that ‘the survival and flourishing of radical forms of moving image exhibition’ was dependent on its crossover with multiple scenes—fine art, film and music—and access therefore to their respective resources. This mode of working, they add, ‘privileged event-based forms of organising, rather than long-term commitments.’ New Visions’ exploitation of (or capitulation to) the festivalisation phenomenon, however, in alleviating them of custody for a physical space, permanent staff or other securities, left the organisation dangerously exposed. Indeed, despite having established itself as a regular fixture operating at a professional register with a proven international reputation, the 1996 festival would be its last flagship event.

The compound issues which led to its termination, however, began following the second festival. Dickson (2020) remembers that at that point they had ‘wanted to take that to an even

⁸⁷ See also Jack (2020a).

higher level but as soon as that festival was over and reporting had been done there were indications coming [...] that the SAC didn't want to be supporting two festivals of that nature.' That year, the Arts Council of Great Britain was coerced into a major restructuring following a cash cut of £3.2m, for the first time in its history (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1994, p. 1). A demerger of the SAC, Welsh Arts Council and Arts Council of England (ACE) was established by Royal Charter, cleanly dividing jurisdiction over their respective geographies. For the SAC, this new responsibility and tightening budget had manifold effects. To reduce expenses, they initiated the dissolution and redistribution the SAC Collection which then comprised 1,950 works of art, thereby reducing the overheads of four salaries, administration and conservation (net £64,107 in 1992/1993) (Scottish Arts Council, 1994b), and sold their share of the CCA building, purchased upon the Third Eye Centre's liquidation (Berry, 1994).

The restructuring had unintended consequences for the UK-wide networks which had underpinned moving image exhibition. Film and Video Umbrella, for instance, became less involved in Scotland when, as Stephanie Smith (2020) remembers, 'Scottish funding and English funding was made distinct.' Meanwhile, the Moving Image Touring & Exhibition Service (MITES), a subsidiary of Moviola, latterly FACT, which had supplied subsidised equipment to Scottish exhibitors like New Visions since its formation in 1991 (Dickson, 2020), was conscripted, as *Infosource* reported, into 'de-prioritising Scottish events due to political changes' with obvious 'implications for the growth of Scotland's two festivals, the Fringe Film & Video Festival and New Visions' (New Visions, 1995a). Vance (2020) remembers that 'the problem was always equipment back then,' although Tramway 'was building up a bank' it never amounted to an equivalent resource. More diffuse, however, were the demerger's effects on the distribution of subsidy, introducing a new hesitancy to SAC spending. By the third edition, as Vance and Larkin (1996) note in their programme introduction, they were delivering a festival of the same scale 'despite serious funding cuts and resultant pressures.' Much of the programme relied on supportive co-production partnerships, Vance (1999, p. 12) later claiming that in that edition they received nothing from the SAC.

Relations with the SAC had long been strained. After the second festival, Dickson (quoted in Oldenborgh, 1994, p. 8) remarked that he was 'astonished at how the funders just do not turn up at these events.' Vance (2020) also felt they 'were quite keen to be critical,' and what little

engagement they had was undermining, limited to complaints about the work. An impasse was reached with the SAC refusing to fund both New Visions and the FFVF, whilst neither were willing to surrender their hard-won identity and reputation. They ‘put the thumb screws on, to put it crudely,’ Dickson (2020) says, demanding ‘a working group from the two festivals to come together to talk about a merger.’

To break the stalemate in 1997, the SAC and Scottish Screen, newly formed, commissioned two strategic reports on the existing provision for and development of artists’ film and video in Scotland in 1997.⁸⁸ One report, *Equipment Technology Resource for Scotland*, was undertaken by Clive Gillman and Eddie Berg of FACT, drawing from their expertise in overseeing MITES. The other, *Strategic Development of Creative Video, Film & New Media*, was prepared by Positive Solutions (David Fishel), a private firm, also Liverpool-based. The latter was informed by questionnaires circulated to artists, producers, exhibitors and educators; a review of secondary market research using cases like Video Positive and the GFT; and a set of interviews and discussions with key professionals. It found that the art sector viewed the SAC as unable to deal with cross-disciplinary applications and where such schemes had existed they were short-lived; that Scottish Screen considered short-filmmaking a stepping stone to commercial production; and that expertise was lacking in both funders but abundant, though uncompensated, at both festivals (Positive Solutions, 1997, pp. 10–12). In its recommendations, it identified New Visions as the ‘more feasible vehicle’ for development, though ultimately proposed a merger, forming a new organisation with proper investment, to satisfy the most criteria (Positive Solutions, 1997, pp. 15, 16). The report projected that said organisation could be constituted by November 1997 for preparation of a first festival in November 1998 (Positive Solutions, 1997, pp. 26–27). Eliciting the goodwill of many artists, organisers and educators, the two consultancies, Vance (1999, p. 12) claims,

⁸⁸ Earlier in 1997, the Scottish Film Production Fund had been subject to headline-grabbing allegations of cronyism from Bill Forsyth and resignations swiftly followed (Forsyth, 1997; Marshall and Houston, 1997; McNeil, 1997). In order to restore its reputation, and to reconcile Scotland’s inefficient film sector, the SFPPF was reconstituted as Scottish Screen, merging with the Scottish Film Council, Scottish Broadcast and Film Training Trust, Scottish Film Archive and Scottish Screen Locations (Dick, 1997). Significantly, its functions were also revised; Scottish Screen was to be ‘more focused on developing commercial film activity and re-examining its role in relation to supporting cultural practice,’ further deprioritising oppositional forms of moving image production (Positive Solutions, 1997, p. 4).

cost the SAC and Scottish Screen £9,000. That ‘probably exceeded all the investment that they’d put into both of those festivals in their entire history,’ reasons Dickson (2020).⁸⁹

With funders under no obligation to action these recommendations, however, neither the development of an equipment resource nor the festival merger progressed as planned. Revealing they ‘had not formally adopted any of the recommendations in the report,’ the SAC continued to claim, without financial substantiation, that the film and video sector was a priority for development (Daniel-McElroy, 1999). At a round table in 1998, however, Paul Cameron (quoted in Keeley et al., 1998) noted that artists in Scotland continued to be excluded from MITES’ remit, with no equivalent means of accessing equipment forthcoming: ‘they can’t get hold of a video projector or a computer, etc. or rather they can’t get them at a cost they or the gallery can afford.’

The formation of a bespoke agency meanwhile was deemed unactionable. The SAC and Scottish Screen argued that they could not provide the new organisation’s core funding due to their financial commitment to the planned Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA, 1999–) venue (Scottish Arts Council *et al.*, 1999). With a bridging fund of c.£4,000, a steering group for the new organisation, the Moving Image Art Agency (MIAA, 1998–1999), was formed; Vance stepped back and Larkin was appointed its Administrative Coordinator (Larkin, 2020). ‘A forced marriage,’ Dickson (2020) explains that this ‘led to the erosion of the morale and the more cooperative spirit’ which bred ‘schisms and people falling out.’ The development of the MIAA was beset with conflict, though accounts differ. Steering group members Dickson and Chris Byrne (formerly of FVFF) were charged with developing a funding proposal for the National Lottery’s New Directions scheme, undertaking a retreat on the Isle of Lewis to do so in July 1998 (New Visions, 1999, p. 2).

⁸⁹ Evaluating the needs of the cross-disciplinary workshop sector, the SAC also commissioned *A Review of Open Access Facilities in Scotland*. Contrary to trends in cultural policy, this found that the area needed more investment, meeting the disapproval, Dickson (2020) remembers, of the SAC’s Director of Visual Arts, Susan Daniel-McElroy.



Figure 58: New Media Scotland (1999) 'Call for proposals,' *The List*, 7 October, p. 79.

In 1999, however, the SAC announced a long-awaited fund of £40,000 for the film and video sector to which Byrne and Dickson successfully pitched a new agency that would oversee ten digital art and three moving image commissions, New Media Scotland (NMS, 1999–), claiming the entirety (New Visions, 1999, p. 4; Dickson, 2020). When probed, the SAC responded that 'the decisions [to fund NMS] were made on the merit of the application and the work, not on the basis of the Positive Solutions Report' (Daniel-McElroy, 1999). Vance (2020) explains,

It was a bit of a coup, [...] we ended up with no festival [...] even the title itself is a big shift. *New Media Scotland* were more focused on new media and those projects, again, experimental film and artists' film and video were left behind.

Larkin had been 'mysteriously dropped' and the working structure outlined for the MIAA abandoned (New Visions, 1999, p. 5). The New Visions board expressed their dismay at their exclusion from the process, 'did not consider itself part of New Media Scotland' and argued that no merger had taken place (Law, 1999). The directorship of NMS was advertised and Byrne was installed, further personnel changes and its pursuit of a fast-diverging form of artistic practice put an end to promised festival activity. New Visions was briefly reprised via

FrankfurterSchule 2000 (13 May – 3 June 2000), their first event since 1996, which presented the work of Peter Kubelka's former students and associates including Haegue Yang and Monika Schwitte (*New Visions*, 2000). The company subsequently became dormant until 2003 when it was renamed and reconstituted by Larkin and Mona Rai as Document Human Rights Film Festival (2003–), adopting a new remit in the process, more activist-oriented and less artist-led. The FFVF, meanwhile, was discontinued with no heir, leaving Edinburgh without concerted promotion of artists' film and video for over a decade.

4.4 First Reels, Scottish Screen and the new film policy landscape, 1991–1999

The boom-and-bust of the festival exhibition sector in the 1990s is closely mirrored and often supplied by concurrent developments in moving image production. Throughout the 1980s, the Scottish Film Production Fund had supported experimental productions in a handful of cases where co-production had been possible.⁹⁰ With growing demand, however, the continued underfunding of the SFPF became increasingly prohibitive. In 1987, its administrator John Brown (quoted in Mathieson, 1987) admitted that ‘the fund has reached a kind of plateau where it won’t really get off unless it acquires a full-time director. [...] I also feel that the fund is a little passive—I would like to see us generating ideas or possibilities ourselves, adding that dimension of active commissioning.’ Brown’s vision materialised when a string of directors—Penny Thomson (1989–1991), Kate Swan (1991–1993), Eddie Dick (1994–1997)—would soon oversee the development of commissioning schemes Tartan Shorts (1992–2006), Prime Cuts (1996–1998) and Geur Gheàrr (1996–1998). These new schemes presented opportunities to filmmakers where production grants had been notoriously difficult to obtain, and even then, unlikely to manifest in a finished work. By 1991, with an income by grants of £221,900, the SFPF had only disbursed subsidy to fifty-one projects, of which fifteen (29%) had gone into production—a success rate, they note, exceeded the industry norm of 5–10% (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1991a). With financing already in place, however, commissioning schemes offered a certainty to applicants. Following the launch of Tartan Shorts, the SFPF’s income by grants grew by over half to £340,000 in 1994, testifying also to potential revenue generation harnessed via partnership schemes (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1994a).

The extent to which these schemes welcomed dissent from conventional narrative forms is however limited. Tartan Shorts was established via a three-year agreement with BBC Scotland to confer three awards per annum of £30,000 ‘for production of a ten-minute short film on 16mm or 35mm, for broadcast on BBC Scotland and, hopefully, the BBC network, and for festival and theatrical showings where possible’ (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1993, p. 5). By 1996, this had matured to three awards of £55,000 for teams with ‘experience in the film industry’ to produce a fifteen-minute film (The Herald, 1996b; The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1996, p. 4). In its first cycle, the scheme commissioned Peter Capaldi’s *Franz Kafka’s It’s a Wonderful Life* (1993), which won an Academy Award, and latterly

⁹⁰ See section 3.3.1.

offered a springboard for directors Peter Mullan (*Fridge*, 1995) and Lynne Ramsay (*Gasman*, 1998). For some, however, its commercial pretensions were naïve to the development of real grassroots talent: Colin McArthur (1993, p. 32) decried its regressive language—evoking tartantry—and blinkered propagation of talent, pointing to the terrible irony that ‘concurrent with the [scheme’s] press release, two young Glasgow-based film/videomakers, Douglas Aubrey and Alan Robertson, received a letter from the SFPF informing them that their request for funding to complete their feature film had been turned down.’⁹¹

In concession to the lack of entry-level support, the SFPF then launched Prime Cuts in 1996, in association with STV and British Screen. Designed for applicants ‘relatively new to the industry and would preferably have not worked in broadcast television before in the key three roles of producer, director and writer,’ Prime Cuts commissioned ‘short dramas of five minutes with a budget of £23,000 [each] and shot on standard 16mm’ (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1996, p. 4). These included dance-film director Katrina McPherson’s *Dancing, Some Days* (1996), featuring a young Kelly Macdonald, and Morag MacKinnon’s *Fantoosh* (1996). Though marketed as accessible, its prescription of dramatic form by no means welcomed oppositional approaches. The same year, in partnership with Comataidh Telebhisein Gàidhlig (CTG) and BBC Scotland, the Tartan Shorts formula was replicated for Geur Gheàrr which had the remit of producing two Gaelic-language films of ten minutes duration per annum, with a budget of £45,000 (The Scottish Film Production Fund, 1994b). These three schemes arguably corroborated the critique that Scotland’s film infrastructure was ‘unequipped to think of alternatives to the industrial model’ (McArthur, 1993, p. 31). Following the SFPF’s reconstitution as Scottish Screen in 1997, Positive Solutions’ strategic report found art sector opinion of the organisation poor: that it was oblivious to grassroots development; that it lacked expertise; and that it only viewed short-form production as a training practice (Positive Solutions, 1997, pp. 9–10).

Support for experimental voices was however cultivated elsewhere, if unexpectedly, via the SFPF’s sister organisation, the Scottish Film Council. The SFC and SFPF had been distinguished in that the former financed exhibition- and education-based activities whilst the latter controlled film production subsidy.⁹² It is a productive anomaly, therefore, that the SFC

⁹¹ Undeterred, Pictorial Heroes revised their ‘end-of-the millennium road movie’ as a series of five short episodes, *Work, Rest and Play* (1990–1995), finishing the first three without any public finance (Pictorial Heroes, 1994).

⁹² The SFPF developed between 1979 and 1982 partly in response to the SFC’s limited remit, *the promotion of film culture in Scotland*, which prohibited them from allocating funds to film production. See section 2.5.

established its own scheme, First Reels (1991–1999). Though commissioning histories are few, the Glasgow Short Film Festival (GSFF) organised a First Reels retrospective in 2019 and in doing so reconciled a working list of the over-130 films it supported and interviewed several scheme participants. As they justly note, ‘unlike the other Scottish production schemes of the 1990s [...] First Reels refuses easy categorisation’ (Lloyd, 2019, p. 59). Described by Alan Morrison (1992, p. 68) as ‘one of the most foresighted decisions within the world of talent, commitment and poverty that is the Scottish film industry,’ First Reels was established via a partnership between the SFC and Scottish Television (Parr, 1992, p. 95). Ranging from £50 to £2,000, the first grants were awarded to thirty individuals in 1991, whilst £2,000 facilitation grants were also accorded to production centres Glasgow Film and Video Workshop, Video Access Group, Edinburgh, and Edinburgh Film Workshop Trust (Morrison, 1992, p. 68). The first commissions debuted at the Glasgow Film Theatre (1–5 September 1992), some screening again at the Fringe Film & Video Festival that December. Three documentaries profiling participants were also broadcast on STV each year. Amongst the participants GSFF identifies are artists Stephen Hurrell, Shaz Kerr, Mandy McIntosh, Elsie Mitchell, Ewan Morrison, Gillian Steel and Sarah Tripp (Lloyd, 2019, pp. 59–61).

First Reels was novel in multiple ways. Its brief avoided prescription upon form—*drama, documentary and experimental projects* (*The List*, 1995, p. 36)—aiming instead at first-time filmmakers. Pauline Law (quoted in *The List*, 1993a, p. 10) celebrated this wide remit: ‘everyone is talking about creating a film industry, but First Reels is one of the few things that counter-balances that with more experimental work.’ Its application process was also undemanding. After being turned down by the SFPPF ‘via a rather snippy phone call from its notoriously abrasive director,’ scheme participant David Cairns (quoted in Lloyd, 2019, p. 56) remembers, ‘it was hard for me to believe that [First Reels] could make an informed decision based on the sparse information I was able to provide.’ To the competitive reputation of the SFPPF, First Reels offered a welcome reprieve. This difference owes much to its relative informality, a structurelessness that left space for artists’ intervention. Established by Erika King—‘a big proponent of access across all art forms’—scheme coordinator Dan MacRae (quoted in Lloyd, 2019, pp. 57–58) explains, ‘there was vast amounts of naivety [...] we had little sense of what was really required of us, but more crucially of the filmmakers.’ As the scheme matured, its financial and training-based offering was enhanced—in its third year the upper limit was increased to £3,000, in its fourth to £4,000 (*The List*, 1993b, p. 16; *The List*, 1995, p. 36). Contrary to expansionist tendencies, however, this didn’t much alter

the shape of its output; it was not unusual for artists to return to the scheme multiple times. The experimental productions that First Reels facilitated are numerous, though it is productive to identify a few case studies that embody its transformative potential.

One early commission which proves resistant to easy categorisation, defying too the expectations of artists' film being propagated via the gallery system, was Shaz Kerr's *Tool* (1993). 'Strictly speaking a second reel' (*The List*, 1993a, p. 9), one article noted, *Tool* was foreshadowed by *Dookit* (1993), a one-minute short comprising a close-up portrait of a homing pigeon as a charged symbol of class, invoking disgust amongst some and pride for others. Buoyed by First Reels funding, *Tool* delved deeper into the gendered stereotypes embedded within the cultural institutions of a certain working-class central belt identity: pigeon fancying, greyhound racing and Orange marches. Shot in black and white, a woman journeys through a dream-like warren of rooms, each housing a surreal vignette of Scottishness, before breaking out a window into a spliced-together landscape, part-Berlin, part-Scottish suburbia (Kerr, 1994). Inserting women into fraternal societies, the film troubles the masculine nationalism that often pervades the Scottish self-image. 'The kind of film that is overlooked in the push for television-friendly productions' (Law quoted in *The List*, 1993a, p. 10), it connects more with the uncanny film-space of Jean Cocteau or Maya Deren than the realist aesthetic of *Clydesidism*. In November 1993, *Tool* screened at London Film Festival in *Over the Border*, a programme of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art graduates (*The List*, 1993c, p. 20). Through the same network, via Fields & Frames Productions, *Tool* also found distribution. Alongside *Television Interventions* (1993), Fields & Frames released three more SAC-subsidised video packages: *Semblances* (c.1992), *Animation* (c.1993) and *Passages* (c.1993).⁹³ In company with work by Louise Crawford, John Butler, Sarah Tripp and Simon Fildes, *Tool* and *Dookit* were included in *Passages*, a 69-minute collection which purported to 'examine forms of liberty, both mental and physical; exploring concepts of transition from one state to another' (Fields & Frames Productions, c.1993). Both were shown at New Visions 1994 (New Visions, 1994a).

⁹³ Mostly featuring alumni of the School of Television and Electronic Imaging, *Semblances* profiled a number of women working with video whilst *Animation* looked at its namesake tendency in contemporary artists' work.



Figure 59: McIntosh, M. (1995) *Donkey Skin*. [VHS] Courtesy of the artist.

Inspired by the eclecticism of the First Reels GFT showcase and Kerr’s work in particular, Mandy McIntosh applied to the scheme’s next round and subsequently developed two projects: *Donkey Skin* (1995) and *Eagle Eye* (1997) (McIntosh, 2021). She remembers her first proposal: ‘I was at GSA at the time, making sculptural blankets out of bread. I stitched a slice of bread to my application, which was handwritten because I had no computer’ (McIntosh quoted in Lloyd, 2019, p. 56). The resulting work, *Donkey Skin* was filmed in Galway and traced the regional Aran knitting style through a community of older women crafters, drawing upon fashion editorial photography motifs, scratch video and personal archive. Its audio comprises a similar collage of oral instructions given for the knitting technique and folk song, distorted and stretched into a sonic landscape. Ever tongue-in-cheek, a blanket of sliced bread, elegantly crocheted, also makes a cameo (McIntosh, 1995). In many ways, the work—her first moving image project—provided a segue from the artist’s training in textiles towards a community-minded video practice. ‘The scheme was life changing for me,’ she explains, ‘it allowed me to work in moving image, which is something I still do’ (McIntosh quoted in Lloyd, 2019, pp. 56–57). *Donkey Skin* was included in New Visions’ *Diaspora* tour for Fotofeis ’95 (New Visions, 1995c), Galway Film Fleadh and the International Women’s Film Festival, Madrid (McIntosh, 2021).

Eagle Eye, meanwhile, further developed this bricolage approach. The work collapses a number of death rituals—floristry, the distribution of an estate, *Día de los Muertos* celebrations—and locations of personal significance—Galway, Brislington, Springburn, Mexico—into a *memento mori* road trip, interrupted by verses of poetry contained in highly stylised intertitles (McIntosh, 1997). Both films were featured in a survey exhibition curated

by Nikki Forrest, *Video d'Ecosse* (Articule Gallery, Montreal, 1998).⁹⁴ An exchange between stateless nations, Scotland and Quebec, this preceded a national touring programme of moving image from Canada, *Canadian Fall* (1999), including work by Steve Reinke, curated by Holger Mohaupt, coordinated by Paula Larkin (Vance, 1999, p. 13).



Figure 60: McIntosh, M. (1997) *Eagle Eye*. [VHS] Held at: Glasgow: National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive. 7986.

Despite individual successes, First Reels was not without structural problems. Beyond the annual theatrical showcase and the broadcast of selected works, no distribution infrastructure existed for ongoing support. Any afterlife relied upon the artist's own initiative and personal network, though some attentive promoters like New Visions offered a regular pipeline to exhibition. As Brian Keeley (Keeley *et al.*, 1998, p. 10) of Aberdeen Video Access noted,

It isn't the people who administer First Reels who phone up the workshop and say 'give me a screening.' It is me who organises the venue and promotes the event. You'd think there'd be something other than simply a showcase screening at the Glasgow Film Theatre.

These problems now seem symptomatic of discordant understandings of the ultimate purpose of the scheme—a tension between the agendas of participants and funders. As Gus Macdonald, Chief Executive at STV, saw it, 'First Reels is a great opportunity for young talent to shine on screen. [...] The series is also used as a step in the training ladder, and it allows us to spot new talent at an early stage' (*The List*, 1995). By 1995, around a third of participants had 'graduated' to working with larger budgets or in the industry (*The List*, 1995). The scheme was evaluated through such metrics, its funding contingent upon a record

⁹⁴ Alongside video work by Anne-Marie Copestake (*Driver*, 1994; *Hiding*, 1997), Alan Currall (*Jetsam*, 1995; *Sulky*, 1995), Karen Dickson (*Untitled*, 1997), Michèle Lazenby (*A Short Film About (Pigeon) Love*, 1997), Holger Mohaupt (*Kilmany Blue*, 1996; *Fall*, 1997; *Tallow, Gelatin and Semen*, 1997; *Street*, 1998) and Clara Ursitti (*Untitled*, 1995; *Pheromone Link*, 1997). Forrest was later invited to revise the *Video d'Ecosse* exhibition as a screening programme for the first Toronto International Video Art Biennial, *TRANZ<--->TECH* (Latvian House, Toronto, 21 October 1999) (Pleasure Dome *et al.*, 1999).

of professional development, rather than artistic merit. Much like the SFPF schemes, upskilling surmounted the creative process and eventually First Reels fell victim to its own success, interpreted as outgrowing its means. Whilst the commissions premiere in 1999 was ‘packed to the rafters,’ ironically, the scheme was to be wound up and replaced with another, Cineworks (1999–2007) (Waddell, 1999). Administrated by GFVW with funding from Scottish Screen and the National Lottery, Cineworks would ‘offer production grants of up to £15,000 and finishing grants of £5,000 to five filmmakers (with some previous experience)’ (*The List*, 1999, p. 20). Though fewer in number, the Cineworks commissions are not well reconciled, posing a challenge for the recuperation of artists’ negotiation of it. McIntosh, for one, developed *I am Boy* (2000), a BAFTA-nominated experimental portrait of Misha Maltsev, a Siberian adolescent, through his musical influences pre- and post-Perestroika. More revealing, perhaps, is the trajectory of Sarah Tripp.



Figure 61: Tripp, S. (2001) *Testatika*. [VHS] Held at: Glasgow: National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive. 7866.

Like McIntosh, Tripp applied to First Reels after attending a GFT showcase, developing her short film *Weather Vain* (1993) whilst still a student at GSA (Tripp, 2020). Following postgraduate study, she returned with *Two Days in Spring* (1997), a misanthropic spy thriller parody, set in the interstitial urban environs of Glasgow, its airport, car parks and Sighthill stone circle (Tripp, 1997). With the arrival of Cineworks, Tripp realised *Testatika* (2001) which sought to investigate a fabled perpetual energy device of the same name. Recording her pilgrimage to the Methernitha community, Switzerland, where the machine is purported to reside, interspersed by interviews with its religious pseudo-scientists, *Testatika* inhabits the form of investigative documentary but remains unreliable, resisting the pursuit of an objective truth (Tripp, 2001). *Testatika* screened at Edinburgh International Film Festival (Brill *et al.*, 2001, p. 25) and later exhibited as an installation at Cornerhouse, Manchester (6 October – 4 November 2001). Straddling exhibition contexts, it exists, as Neil Mulholland (2009, p. 24) notes, ‘somewhere between artists’ film and independent short film.’

After a halcyon decade of provision for this kind of slippery work, propagated by First Reels, inherited by Cineworks, funders began to tighten their remit. As Tripp (2020) remembers,

I became aware that there were two very different support structures. One was for artists' moving image, which was primarily lower-budget, and then there was film funding which was higher-budget, but that was very narrative driven. They were quite separate [...] they had very different cultures.

Five years later, the ambiguity of form that Tripp had exploited in earlier works was briefly replaced with an industry-facing focus in her Cineworks short *Me & Her* (2006). Following two cleaners in a city hotel, the film switches between romantic comedy and thriller. Its uncharacteristically conventional narrative, technical gloss and long end credits testify to a very different sort of production. Returning to experimental modes thereafter, Tripp's commercial detour is perhaps reflective of the increasingly prescriptive direction of public film subsidy in the 2000s. Fortunately, in the same few years, following an extended period of patchy, short-lived support, a tide of reform at the SAC, resulting in the first *Visual Arts Strategy for Scotland* (2002) ushered in a new era of arts funding promising longer-term support across disciplines at levels previously unprecedented.

Chapter Five: 2000–2021

5.1 DIY Exhibition, 2000–2010

By the imprecise measure of representation in major surveys of contemporary art in Scotland, the proportion of moving image work being produced for gallery contexts has steadily grown. At *New Art in Scotland* (1994), film- and videomakers only comprised a tenth of contributors. By the next major exercise in surveying current practice, *Here + Now: Scottish Art 1990–2001* (2001), spanning five venues across Dundee and Aberdeen, this proportion had grown to around a quarter of the fifty-two participants (Brown and Tufnell, 2001). In the successive snapshots these exhibitions convey, the moving image had gained a stronger foothold in the popular imagination by the new millennium. In 2002, an audit of the visual arts sector commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council found that 15% of 527 surveyed practitioners worked with film or video, nearly all of whom were under the age of forty-four and lived in an urban environment (Bonnar Keenlyside, 2002, pp. 6, 12, 14). Of all media, artists working with film or video were least likely to have gallerist representation ($\approx 17\%$) and were largely unable to derive a main income from this work ($\approx 18\%$). They were amongst the most reliant on specialist facilities (94%) whilst also most dissatisfied with their access to such facilities (Bonnar Keenlyside, 2002, pp. 19, 29, 37, 54). In effect, these figures maintain an image of inadequate provision. In England by comparison, Dan Ward (2019, p. 10) notes, this period saw a lasting institutional abnegation of responsibility for non-commercial production contrary to a growing international profile: Arts Council England's Film, Video and Broadcast department closed in 1997, the BFI's Production Board in 2000 and self-organised groups 'were gradually defunded and made obsolete due to cheaper digital technologies.'

Creative Scotland's successive *Visual Arts Sector Review* (2016) found that by 2015 over 40% of 680 respondents were working with film or video, an increase of 29%, thereby exceeding the proportion of those working with traditional media like photography and printmaking (Creative Scotland, 2016, pp. 9, 17). In 2002 most artists in Scotland (62%) had a total income below £10,000, whilst in 2015 earnings averaged £17,526, in both cases falling short of the Scottish average by over £10,000 (Bonnar Keenlyside, 2002, p. 45; *The Herald*, 2003; Office for National Statistics, 2015; Creative Scotland, 2016, p. 25). This data demonstrates a trend of exponential growth in the uptake of moving image by artists in Scotland since the early 2000s, supported by a proliferation of new initiatives and

organisations. In a period also characterised by a growing international profile, pronounced in flagship cultural enterprises like Scotland + Venice (2003–) and the Glasgow International (2005–), these reports also reveal a systemic and enduring devaluation of artists' labour in Scotland. The practice of artists' moving image in Scotland in the twenty-first century, in one sense, is defined by the conflict between popularisation, access and the abiding struggle for support. In the following chapter, which cannot begin to profile every node in this expanding ecology, I navigate a series of case studies through which the compound infrastructural, technological and critical factors that catalyse this change are revealed. In three parts, it considers firstly the liberatory phenomenon of DIY exhibition, secondly the revival and problem of the festival model of support, and lastly the institutionalisation of the moving image, which give form to the conditions of today.

5.1.1 Flourish Nights (2001–2003) and the undoing of exhibition

On the fifth floor of 73 Robertson Street, the same building once occupied by the New Visions and *Variant* offices, Flourish Studios were established in 1999, offering affordable studio provision just as Fuse had drawn to a close. A dilapidated building in Glasgow's city centre, affected by what Neil Mulholland (2003a) describes as a state of 'Baudelairean decay,' the distinctive premises were also occupied by The Modern Institute and 'a couple of other strange businesses like a Freemasons regalia outfitter, taxidermy and the *invisible menders*,' says studio-holder Lucy McKenzie (2020). Testifying to the studios' haphazard life, she remembers that despite running a dehumidifier and having musicians occasionally blow the fuse box, they never paid an electricity bill (McKenzie, 2020). With a constitution cut-and-pasted from Transmission, the organisation was soon established as a charity and began hosting *ad hoc* parties.⁹⁵ The residents accrued an old video projector with a pink spot in the centre of the image, a screen and bunch of old wooden chairs, saved from disposal by the CCA (McKenzie, 2020; Frost, 2021). The events soon morphed into a programme dubbed Flourish Nights (2001–2003), coordinated by Alex Frost, Sophie Macpherson and Julian Kildear, later joined by McKenzie.

Flourish Nights arrived in a moment when, as Frost (2021) explains, artists began 'to propagate the collective facility of the artist-run space into other models (radio, fanzine and cabaret).' Perhaps another catalyst in artists' self-organising at this time were the overlapping lottery-funded redevelopments of Tramway (1998–2000) and the CCA (1999–2001)

⁹⁵ Similar venues emerging in the early 2000s included The Chateau and Studio Warehouse, latterly SWG3.

premises, leaving both programmes reduced and relocated, restricting too the social utility of these spaces. In this context, Frost, artist-filmmaker Duncan Campbell and sound artist Mark Vernon had already established Radio Tuesday (1999–2002) as an itinerant artist-run radio station. Radio Tuesday's projects included a live-streamed residency at Transmission involving performance, interviews, discussions and sound art, *e.g. Sometime Instant* (25 March – 8 April 2000), supported by New Media Scotland and the Scottish Arts Council (Transmission, 2000).

Graduating from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design and returning to Glasgow, artist-filmmaker Luke Fowler launched a parallel label-cum-platform Shadazz (2000–) which crossed experimental music and art scenes in producing fanzines, CDs, records and a VHS compilation *Evil Eye is Source* (SHADAZZ 04, 2002). Fowler (2020) explains that 'the purpose of that project was to bring together different artists; different video artists, with musicians, and to foster collaborations where I thought they didn't exist.' He felt that for many moving image artists, awareness of the sonic was too rudimentary, Shadazz offered a means 'to propagate that and extol the virtues of those vices to other individuals that were not yet on board.' *Evil Eye is Source* paired artists with musicians to co-produce videos: Anne-Marie Copestake and Fred Pederson worked with indie outfit Life Without Buildings on *PS Exclusive* (2002); Katy Dove with Devotone on the psychedelic animation *Motorhead* (2002); Torsten Lauschmann with electro group Pro Forma on *Passion Prefix* (2002); whilst Mark Leckey offered a parodic advert for his band donAteller's forthcoming album. As one review suggested, like Factory Records' tapes before—shown at *Glasgow Events Space* (1986)—*Evil Eye is Source* provided 'an attitude, look and profile for an emergent scene' (Beasley, 2002).

With a similar rationale, Scott Myles organised a series of projects in his Dennistoun flat including *Film Club* (28 May 2000). Comprising three-minute Super 8 commissions by artist-musician groups Elizabeth Go, The Cocktail Party and Punish, this one-night exhibition promised 'half preview, half party and a low-key pleasant evening' (Myles quoted in Jeffrey, 2000, p. 86).⁹⁶ With beanbags loaned from Habitat and Douglas Gordon, *Film Club* was one of many domestic projects, informal and hastily organised, but with an important social function: Myles (quoted in Lowndes, 2010, p. 284) remembers that 'about 100 people came

⁹⁶ Elizabeth Go were Victoria Morton, Hayley Tompkins, Sue Tompkins, Sarah Tripp and Cathy Wilkes; The Cocktail Party were Fred Pedersen and Thomas Seest; and Punish were Robert Johnston and Ewan Imrie.

and we had to do two showings because it was so packed.’ The influence of these hybrid projects and other likeminded deviations in exhibitionary form are writ large in Flourish Nights’ multidisciplinary programme.

The Flourish Nights programme prominently featured film, video and slide-based work alongside performance, music and readings in three annual editions: consecutive Sunday evenings over four weeks in the summer of 2001, three in autumn 2002 and four in winter 2003. In its first year, the programme comprised screenings of local moving image by Campbell, Macpherson and Pederson, Michelle Naismith and James Thornhill as A Love Laboratory (*Bonjour Ficelle*, 2001) and Andrew Hobson, of punk band Uncle John & Whitelock, alongside London-based artists Oliver Payne and Nick Relph (*Driftwood*, 1999) and Annika Ström (McKenzie, 2002b). Without funding, the Nights relied on unpaid contributions and in-kind equipment, subsidised partly by beer sales: ‘absolutely like sellotaped together,’ McKenzie (2020) jokes. In subsequent editions, Flourish Nights was supported by two small grants from the SAC of £1,000 awarded in 2002 and £1,880 in 2003 (Scottish Arts Council, n.d.).



Figure 62: McKenzie, L. (2002) *Flourish Nights*, 22 September. [Poster] Courtesy of Lucy McKenzie.

In the second year, McKenzie became more involved, implementing an ambitious, international programme that continued to accommodate the moving image in expanding dialogue with other time-based practices. At the first event (15 September 2002), Hobson and London-based Bonnie Camplin each presented short films. At the second (22 September 2002), McKenzie invited Cabinet, London, her commercial representatives, to collaborate on an event ‘so they could help a bit with the money’ (McKenzie, 2020) for which gallery co-director Martin McGeown curated *International Portrait Gallery*. This presentation featured projection and performance by the eminent conceptual artist Marc Camille Chaimowicz, then in his sixties, in which Alex Kapranos, frontman of art rock band Franz Ferdinand who were also performing, acted as a surrogate body for the artist. This was, Chaimowicz (quoted in Bracewell, 2011) duly noted, ‘before they hit the big time, otherwise there would have been a queue outside the studio.’ McKenzie and Polish artist Paulina Olowaska collaborated on *Oblique Composition* (2002/2003), in which video offered a pretext to a performance in which McKenzie played the clarinet whilst Olowaska made letterforms with her body, and the artists’ silhouettes undressed on screen. An attendee, Sarah Lowndes (2014) recalls that evening ending in disarray, ‘when one of the guests started an unscheduled fire in a sink in a corner.’ The final event in the series (6 October 2002) featured a new translation of Cologne-based Filmgruppe West’s *Aus Lauter Haut (Made of Skin)* (1998–2001); French artist Mathilde Rosier’s video *Les Massacre des Animaux* (2001); and, a projected tableau, *Old Paint*, by Glasgow-based Craig Mulholland (McKenzie, 2002a, 2002b).

In 2003, the third and final edition of Flourish Nights continued to mix collaborators and artforms, the projected image becoming omnipresent across presentations. The series began with a women-only event (23 November 2003), which McKenzie (2020) remembers as ‘probably the one that was most carefully done.’ In their funding evaluation, she explained that ‘this was so we could experiment; explore what this restriction would demand on the meaning of the work [...] and also generate a discussion in Glasgow about this type of discrimination’ (McKenzie, 2004). In doing so, however, she also forfeited SAC support, who, controversy-averse, refused to finance this particular night (McKenzie, 2004). The evening featured Bonnie Camplin’s video *Good Health* (2003), the debut of artist and musician Cosey Fanny Tutti’s video *Confessions Projected* (2003) and another collaboration

between McKenzie and Olowka, *Desky Maidens* (2003)—a play set in a women-only members' club (McKenzie, 2003a).⁹⁷

The second event (30 November 2003) featured a performance by Linder Sterling and Ian Devine, Daniel Heskowitz' video *Conference on Human Ethology* (2003) and Birgit Megerle's slideshow *The Amusement* (2003) (McKenzie, 2003b). The third (7 December 2003) comprised *At various times colours had various names; at the time I recall this colour was called "Puce." So, a "Puce Moment,"* a poetically titled film programme curated by Cerith Wyn Evans, featuring his own Warholian 'celebration of artifice' (O'Pray, 2003, p. 111) *Epiphany* (1984) and 16mm works by Kenneth Anger and Yuji Kobayashi. Presented in the same evening, Fowler, Sue Tompkins and P6 (Phil Eaglesham) performed *Be Dear Crazy Loud* (2003), a composition 'for found cassette, sampler and vocals' (McKenzie, 2004). A preface to Fowler's Turner Prize-nominated 16mm portrait of radical psychiatrist R.D. Laing, *All Divide Selves* (2011), the performance, as Dan Fox (2004) explains, 'took a found tape of a violent argument between a domineering mother and her schizophrenic daughter (who was undergoing Laingian psychotherapy) as the starting point for an intense and confrontational audio work.' Tompkins and Eaglesham alternated and confused the roles of mother and daughter whilst Fowler sampled and processed audio fragments from the tape: 'Fruit / Rock / Cry / Crack You / do not make me vanish' (Fowler, Tompkins and Eaglesham, 2003). The final event of the series and Flourish Nights proper (21 December 2003) included a screening of Bertrand Tavernier's cult sci-fi feature *Death Watch* (1980), filmed in Glasgow and post-industrial Clydeside, alongside German artist Nina Könnemann's video *Unrise* (2002) and *Empty Tourism*, a PowerPoint slideshow by Ewan Imrie (McKenzie, 2003c).

One of a number of highly networked and intersecting projects emerging in the early 2000s, Flourish Nights provides an archetype for the expanding exhibitionary possibilities for the moving image heralded by the democratisation of display technologies. No longer contingent on specialist knowledge, affordable digital projection invited new approaches to the integration of work within live events, precipitating access to an informal, scratch night or cabaret-style model of exhibition once reserved for performance-based practices. Invoking the happenings of the 1970s, Flourish Nights and the cabaret format of presentation eschewed the idealised presentation of black box or white cube in favour of audience sociability,

⁹⁷ McKenzie had intentions to release *Desky Maidens* and *Confessions Projected* as a double-sided LP through her record label Decemberism, though those plans were ultimately aborted (McKenzie, 2020).



Figure 63: Documentation of Megerle, B. (2003) *The Amusement* at Flourish Nights, 30 November. [Photograph] Courtesy of Lucy McKenzie.

At various times colours had various names; at the time I recall this colour was called "Puce".

So, a "Puce Moment".

film programme by Cerith Wyn Evans

Kenneth Anger - " Puce Moment ", USA 1949	6 mins
Kenneth Anger - " Rabbit's Moon ", F 1950 Re-edited 1979	7 mins
Butoh Sankai Juku (Dance Group Sankai Juku) – " Trip into the Interior " Director: Yuji Kobayashi, Choreography: Ushio Amagatsu	19 mins
Kenneth Anger - " Rabbit's Moon ", F 1950 Rare Original Version from 1972	15 mins
Cerith Wyn Evans - " Epiphany ", GB 1983	26 mins

Total running time: 1hr 13 mins

Figure 64: Evans, C. W. (2003) *At various times colours had various names; at the time I recall this colour was called "Puce." So, a "Puce Moment,"* 7 December. [Programme notes] Courtesy of Lucy McKenzie.

interruption and feedback, often featuring works-in-progress.⁹⁸ Commensurate with the temporary disappearance of Glasgow's two largest contemporary art spaces, it is significant too that venue architecture becomes incidental in the cabaret model, occupying artists' studio, domicile, pub or nightclub.⁹⁹

A keen awareness of these conditions is made clear in McKenzie's 2002 SAC funding application: 'the introduction of a temporal, but regular informal venue such as Flourish is greatly beneficial to the local arts community as it widens the scope of how art can be presented and discussed at a grassroots level' (McKenzie, 2002b). She also identifies generative potential in informality, committing to a form of progress distinct from professionalisation: 'while I wish the evenings to develop, I also wish them to remain intimate. I ask for funding not to emphasis [*sic*] making the Nights much grander, or more professionally publicised, etc' (McKenzie, 2002b). In this way, Flourish Nights foreshadow recent criticism of the political implications of professionalisation and attendant calls for supported degrowth in the artist-led sector.¹⁰⁰

As a meeting place for disciplines, contexts and generations, Flourish Nights is significant precisely because of its informality: the ease with the moving image was shown and integrated. Unlike grassroots promoters EventSpace or New Visions before it, Flourish Nights, benefitting from a more post-media attitude, was less preoccupied with advocating for enhanced space and resource for marginalised forms of practice, offering instead a holistic view wherein the inclusion of film and video within a broader curatorial rationale no longer presented an insurmountable technical or conceptual challenge. Like those forbearers, however, Flourish Nights struggled to achieve much critical attention. Its historicisation has instead benefitted from a strong mythology perpetuated by the attendance of Mulholland, Lowndes, and in part by McKenzie's personal success.¹⁰¹ McKenzie silk-screened unique posters for each event, initially distributed across the city as promotional material though later embedded within solo exhibitions *Brian Eno* (2003), *Neuer Achener Kunstverein*,

⁹⁸ For further discussion of this exhibitionary model, see Jack (2020b).

⁹⁹ Whilst resident in Warsaw in 2003, for instance, McKenzie drew upon her experience with Flourish Nights in designing and running a temporary artists' salon and bar with Olowska, *Nova Popularna*.

¹⁰⁰ In recent years, a refusal of professionalisation has been ingested by some artist-led spaces as an anti-capitalist practice. For example, see Transmission's statement upon the withdrawal of their Regular Funding in 2018: 'Transmission believes that Creative Scotland have chosen to cut our funding because they are no longer prepared to invest in an institution that refuses professionalisation, and yet by virtue of its unique history operates at a scale comparable to more professionalised institutions' (Transmission, 2018).

¹⁰¹ Mulholland presented at the event on 6 October 2002. See also Lowndes (2014).

Aachen; *Projects 88: Lucy McKenzie* (2008), Museum of Modern Art, New York; and now a major retrospective at Tate Liverpool (2021–2022) (McKenzie, 2020). These bespoke posters were acquired by the MoMA and Museum Ludwig whose stake in contextualising the works forms a significant narrative agent. ‘Another reason for the mythology,’ McKenzie (2020) adds, ‘could also be that Franz Ferdinand wrote Flourish a bit into their own narrative [...] it was so much this typical band origin story [...] [and] was used in a slightly dubious way.’

5.1.2 Video cabaret: The Open Eye Club (2005–2008)

The cabaret approach to moving image exhibition promoted by Flourish Nights was developed, in degrees of literalism, through a number of subsequent artist-led projects. In Glasgow, a successor might be found in The Open Eye Club (OEC, 2005–2008), an itinerant project curated by artists Karen Cunningham and Leonora Hennessy. In an essay commissioned by the duo, Mulholland (2008) plots a trajectory between Flourish Nights and the OEC, pointing also to themed Film and Performance nights at Embassy Gallery, Edinburgh, and *Smell the Glove Cabaret* (2005) at Generator Projects, Dundee. He argues that despite contemporary practice’s interdisciplinarity, ‘the need to find some dedicated spaces for Video, Performance and Live Art is still pressing albeit that this need is not accompanied by the necessity to establish the legitimacy of “specialist” time-based genres and techniques that was once paramount.’

Responding to the ‘lack of spaces to showcase artists’ video,’ as Mason Leaver-Yap (2006b) writes, the OEC answered a familiar complaint. Hennessy (quoted in Leaver-Yap, 2006b) explained that the OEC doesn’t produce exhibitions, they’re ‘more of a social event, a kind of performance where the collaboration is between us and artists from all practices.’ Like Flourish Nights, with no budget, organisers initially had to ‘beg and borrow everything.’ A series of evening events at Glasgow venues including the Project Room, CCA and Tramway, each programme was premised upon an insistence that work was entirely new to local audiences. In *bazaar* (Tramway, 9 November 2006), as the title invokes, a miscellany of six commissioned works by Babak Ghazi, Ronnie Heeps, Torsten Lauschmann, Yuen Fong Ling, Mickey Mallet and Ciara Phillips offered a diversity of film and video applications, their presentations overlapped, jostling for attention.

In Lauschmann’s *The Curtain* (2006), as Sarah Smith (2006) describes in accompanying notes, a digital image is algorithmically produced according to a cellular automaton, *The Game of Life* (1970), devised by mathematician John Conway. Translated visually, the

formula produces an abstract texture resembling a shimmering, golden curtain. The simulation, installed as a cinematic projection, invokes real-world feelings of anticipation; as another profile notes, ‘the emotive impact [...] is remarkable, the viewer endlessly awaiting the start of a performance that never begins’ (Kay, 2008). An advocate for interdisciplinary working, the OEC also encouraged artists to retool their work for screen-based display; an earlier event *This Is Not A Painting* (Project Room, 2006), for instance, ‘invited painters to swap their brushes for a camera’ (Mottram, 2006). At *bazaar*, meanwhile, printmaker Phillips’ *Chick Flicker* (2006) comprised a succession of images, including seminal works of feminist art by VALIE EXPORT and Adrian Piper, accompanied by the sound of turning pages (Smith, 2006). This browsing effect nimbly transmutes Phillips’ collaborative and reference-laden print practice through the additional dimension of time.

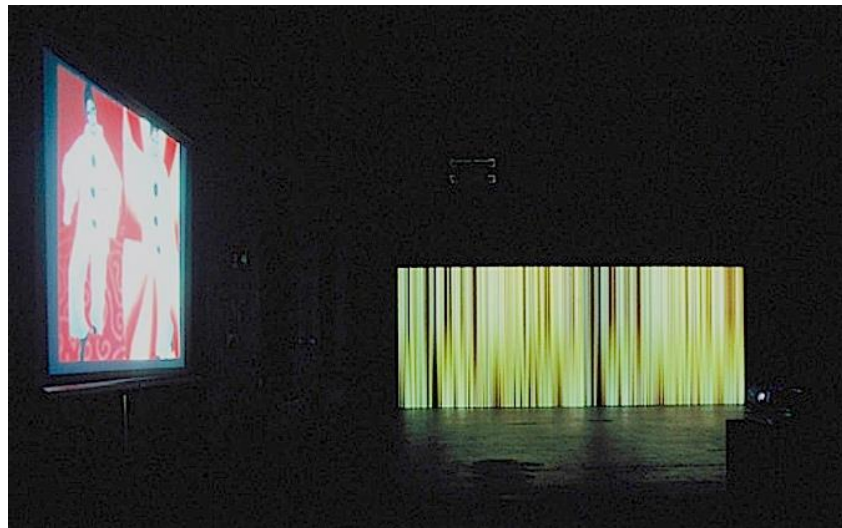


Figure 65: Documentation of (r) Ghazi, B. (2006) *Work in Progress*; (l) Lauschmann, T. (2006) *The Curtain* at *bazaar*, Tramway, Glasgow. [Photograph] Courtesy of Karen Cunningham.

In 2007, the OEC were granted £7,500 from the SAC to produce their last three events (Scottish Arts Council, n.d.). The Club’s finale, *The Human Arc* (Tramway, November 2008) offered the full manifestation of their curatorial rationale: works of video, sculptural installation and performance by Sara Barker, Maze de Boer, Geoffrey Farmer, Martin Healy, Pil and Galia Kollektiv, Scott Myles and Calum Stirling intermingled, co-producing new meanings in their relations. Mulholland (2008) writes that in this *mise-en-scène*,

video performs as a tableau to objects while objects help to illuminate and embody the experience of projected video works. [...] The experimental, the mutable, the unfinished, the failed—attributes that are difficult to enable in conventional gallery exhibitions—can be more readily accommodated in this contingent atmosphere.

This emphasis on polyvocality, theatricality and prioritisation of works-in-progress over resolved objects extends the cabaret model further. It is productive also to consider such events within an international frame, following what Claire Bishop (2004) described as the *laboratory paradigm* in curation. Bishop criticises the curatorial assimilation of artistic tendencies towards interactivity and unresolvedness which had emerged in the 1990s.¹⁰² She argues that in the exhibition-as-laboratory artists become subordinated within a curatorial agenda and ‘an effect of this insistent promotion of these ideas of artist-as-designer, function over contemplation, and open-endedness over aesthetic resolution is often ultimately to enhance the status of the curator, who gains credit for stage-managing the overall laboratory experience’ (Bishop, 2004, p. 53). Bishop’s view of the laboratory paradigm as a kind of parasitism doesn’t appropriately reflect the generative social and economic function of artist-led commissioning projects like the OEC. However, events like *bazaar* and *The Human Arc* do prefigure a certain curatorial primacy which comes into fuller fruition in the exhibition of moving image throughout the 2000s, manifest most acutely within increasingly gargantuan institutional projects like the Glasgow International.

¹⁰² Retroactively dubbed *relational aesthetics* by curator Nicolas Bourriard.

5.2 Festivals in the interdisciplinary era

Converging the phenomena of festivalisation as it emerged in the early 1990s with the experimental exhibitionary forms made possible in the 2000s were a handful of new film festivals. Distinct from forbearers like New Visions, these hybrid platforms, retooled as vehicles for research, abandoned the open-submission model. At Dundee Contemporary Arts, Kill Your Timid Notion (2003–2010) focused on the intersection of experimental film and sound, prioritising ‘artists who cannot easily be classified’ (Kill Your Timid Notion, 2003, p. 1). In Edinburgh, Diversions Film Festival (2008–2009) brokered encounters with historical and contemporary experimental film and video practices, with an educational emphasis. Upon a groundswell in popularity, artists’ work simultaneously began to reappear within mainstream film festival programming.

After a decades-long hiatus, in part remedied by the long-underfunded and ill-fated Fringe Film & Video Festival, such practices were reintroduced to Edinburgh International Film Festival in 2001 via the *Persistence of Vision* strand, curated by Louis Benassi (Knowles, 2020). In 2003, under Artistic Director Shane Danielson, this commitment was extended with the formation of *Black Box* (2003–). In its first year, *Black Box* comprised an eponymous exhibition co-produced with Edinburgh College of Art (31 July – 31 August 2003), featuring four video installations including Jane and Louise Wilson’s *Gamma* (1999) and Isaac Julien’s *Paradise Omeros* (2001), alongside screenings of Matthew Barney’s suite of five feature-length works, *The Cremaster Cycle* (1994–2002) (Edinburgh International Film Festival, 2003). Thereafter, *Black Box* was installed as a regular strand dedicated to artists’ film and video, overseen by Diversions’ Kim Knowles since 2009 (Knowles, 2020).

In Glasgow, meanwhile, the monthly short film night The Magic Lantern (2006–2010) established a short film weekend within the Glasgow Film Festival (GFF, 2005–) in 2008 (Glasgow Short Film Festival, 2019). Inheriting an expansive programming policy, often more sympathetic to experimentation than commercial voices, this focus developed into the autonomous Glasgow Short Film Festival, who continue to platform artists in Scotland and internationally.¹⁰³ At the end of the decade, this work found specialised advocacy via Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival and the Artists’ Moving Image Festival (AMIF).

¹⁰³ In 2015, GSFF moved from February to March, distinguished from the Glasgow Film Festival calendar, and in 2019 was constituted as an independent organisation. GSFF shows new Scottish and international shorts in two competition strands alongside transhistorical curated focuses and profiles.

Through an historical account of the development of KYTN and Diversions, what follows is an articulation of the film festival in the 2000s as a composite entity, combining familiar exhibitionary and social functions with new prerogatives. These promoters, I argue, prepare the ground of audience development, screening opportunities and critical engagement that precipitates demand for year-round support organisations as they emerge in the 2010s.

5.2.1 Kill Your Timid Notion (2003–2010)

As Arika co-directors Barry Esson and Bryony McIntyre (2020) explain, KYTN developed upon an invitation made by Faith Liddell, then director of DCA, having visited the first edition of their experimental music festival Instal (The Arches, 2001–2010). Drawing upon Esson's interest in experimental music, sound art and musique concrète and McIntyre's training in film theory, KYTN negotiated the overlap of these disciplines. Esson (2020) explains that they 'came up at a particular time in the funding structure in Scotland,' wherein both KYTN and Instal benefitted from the residues of lottery investment then largely evaded the cuts which followed the 2008 financial crisis. McIntyre (2020) elaborates, 'there was still millennium money sloshing around [...] we were lucky enough to come up at a time when some of these venues were willing to take risks on new people that didn't really have a track record.' For the first few years, however, neither were paid, both working full time: McIntyre as a short film distribution officer for Scottish Screen, and Esson as project manager for the British Council. After founding Arika as an events production company to consolidate freelance agreements into a partnership arrangement in 2006, both were able to devote full-time attention to programming. KYTN 2003 comprised fifteen-events over three days, upscaling to a sixty-event, week-long marathon by 2010 (Kill Your Timid Notion, 2003, 2010), reflected in funding by a rise of c.£20,000 to £120,000 (Esson and McIntyre, 2020).

The inaugural festival (17–19 October 2003) featured Sunburned Hand of the Man's first show outside of the United States, incorporating film and theatre within their musical composition; a screening of Ira Cohen's *The Invasion of Thunderbolt Pagoda* (1968); and Japanese psych-rock band Acid Mothers Temple, who contributed a live soundtrack to Cohen's film. Two film programmes surveyed historical and contemporary work as it interfaced with experimental music, the first featuring Len Lye's *Colour Cry* (1959), Norman McLaren's *Synchrony* (1971), Lis Rhodes's *Dresden Dynamo*, (1974), the second including Ian Helliwell and Anouk de Clercq, amongst others (Kill Your Timid Notion, 2003). At the second edition (17–19 December 2004) collaborations were brokered between artists and

musicians: improvisational group AMM worked with Malcolm Le Grice; Antony McCall staged his landmark expanded cinema work *Line Describing a Cone* (1973) within a palpable sonic environment by Sachiko M (Kill Your Timid Notion, 2004b, pp. 4, 12). At KYTN 2006, Tony Conrad presented key works *The Flicker* (1966) and *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plane* (1972) and Rhodes staged her two-projector installation *Light Music* (1975) (Kill Your Timid Notion, 2006). The reappraisal of structural cinema became something of a festival signature.¹⁰⁴ In the re-enactment of these works, often to intense phenomenological effect, as in *Line Describing a Cone*, *The Flicker* or *Light Music*, alongside contemporary performances manipulating both analogue and digital technologies, a lineage was articulated between the historic avant-garde and new media performance.¹⁰⁵

For artists in Scotland these were entirely novel encounters. An attendee and invited artist, Luke Fowler (2020) explains that,

For me that was heaven sent and it just seemed like a really great time to have these festivals that looked back at expanded cinema, structural film, flicker film. [...] I don't know whether Barry and Bryony intended it to be an accidental community but, for me, it became the start of an international community of experimental filmmakers.

He credits KYTN and the revived discussion around structural filmmaking with his own switch in media, from video to 16mm film, and when asked which moments in the history of artists' moving image in Scotland seems personally significant, offers Conrad's festival appearance (Fowler, 2020).¹⁰⁶ Though the festival appealed to local audiences, selling out in its first year (Kill Your Timid Notion, 2004a), KYTN actively sought international peers in the artists, programmers and researchers who participated each year. Esson and McIntyre's programming was committedly cosmopolitan, prioritising importation ahead of reflecting local developments—bar rare exceptions in Fowler (KYTN 2008) and Smith/Stewart (KYTN 2010). Being Dundee-based, however, 'there was definitely a marginalisation,' Esson (2020) explains, 'feeling a little hard done-by by a London-centric exhibition focus.' KYTN had, for instance, planned to include Conrad's *Ten Years Alive* in a nationwide tour, but the work was restaged at the invitation of Tate and subject to an exclusivity clause. 'There's a DVD recording of it' Esson (2020) says, 'Dundee and the three things we'd done with Tony before

¹⁰⁴ Subsequent editions included presentations of work by Ken Jacobs, Michael Snow, Guy Sherwin, William Raban, Paul Sharits and Martha Rosler.

¹⁰⁵ Drawn more clearly by the festival's receipt of Alt-w funding (2000–), an award managed by New Media Scotland for the development of new media creativity.

¹⁰⁶ Ann Vance and Kim Knowles also cite the importance of KYTN at this time.

that aren't even a footnote.' KYTN did garner recognition, instead, from a growing academic interest in 1970s avant-garde film. On the occasion of *Expanded Cinema: The Live Record*, a seminal conference at BFI Southbank, organiser Duncan White (2009) produced an expanded cinema 'family tree,' which had KYTN at its endpoint. Reporting on the event, Malcolm Dickson (2008b) reflected that "'then and now" are not so much times apart, but places which are currently merging and transforming one another in new practices.' This prefigured an edited volume (*Expanded Cinema*, 2011), in which A.L. Rees (2011b, p. 19) also pointed to KYTN as one of two noteworthy developments in Scotland, the other being Diversions.

Eschewing local practitioners or an open-submission policy in favour of a vigorous curatorial enquiry, KYTN marked a departure from artist-led approaches to exhibition. Compounded by the growing strain it placed upon the venue and staff, this research-led strategy ultimately led Arika in a different direction. In a 2010 profile, Esson (quoted in Doubal, 2010, p. 29) communicated a burgeoning disillusion with the stasis of festival-based engagement: 'we don't want the festival to be a thing in itself anymore. Ultimately, what we want is to see more people, more fully engaged, with more experimental art forms.' McIntyre (2020) now reflects that,

When we'd started having passion and interests and curiosity, [...] we, probably naively, thought that [these artforms] had some kind of transformative capacity. By their very nature of being *avant-garde* there was a possibility of raising people's consciousness. [...] Through the work of doing this praxis research, in-event research, we were getting to the stage of going, *I'm not entirely sure if that's true*.

Fidelity to one particular artform, she adds, 'didn't really fit the way that the research practice for us needed to go.' Following the last edition of KYTN in 2010, Arika shifted focus to 'an engagement with social justice and thinking not necessarily about art but, well we say, *the aesthetic registers of sociality*' (Esson, 2020). This inspired their *episodic* structure of working which began, aptly, with *Episode 1: A Film is a Statement* at the CCA (19–22 January 2012). Concerning 'film as a way of thinking (about the world)' (Arika, 2012), the programme featured contributions from Chto Delat, Hartmut Bitomsky and Graham Harwood, establishing a socio-political conviction that, over successive iterations, would platform the voice of sex work activists, racial justice campaigners, theorists, performers, poets and writers alongside artists and filmmakers.

5.2.2 Diversions Film Festival (2008–2009)

Within the same milieu of reappraisal for historic film and video, Diversions Film Festival was established by Kim Knowles in 2008 with research development funding from the University of Edinburgh. Following an MSc in European Film Studies at Edinburgh, Knowles completed a PhD on 1920s avant-garde film in Paris in 2006, during which she began attending screenings organised by the Centre Pompidou, Forum des Images and Light Cone (Knowles, 2020). Returning to Edinburgh in 2007 to teach, she found a paucity of comparable activity: ‘having had this really vibrant experimental film—or just generally film—culture in Paris, coming back and feeling... oh’ (Knowles, 2020). By 2008, EIFF’s *Black Box* strand had also begun to waver: ‘a mixture of all kinds of stuff that doesn’t quite fit the main programme’ (Knowles, 2020). In a review of its 2006 iteration, Mason Leaver-Yap (2006a) also hints at this confusion: ‘separating the “art” films from “film” films is an unenviable task, and the murky territory between the two is just about where this year’s *Black Box* section of the EIFF lies.’ Attending to this gap, Knowles successfully proposed a festival at Filmhouse to the university, augmented further by £2,480 in Audience Development funding from Scottish Screen (Scottish Screen, 2009, p. 32).

Without any curatorial experience, Knowles invited filmmakers Pip Chodorov, Frédérique Devaux, Peter Rose and critics A.L. Rees, David Curtis, Duncan White whom she’d encountered in Paris or through conferences to contribute to the first edition (8–11 May 2008). In this way, like KYTN, Diversions was not designed as a platform for artist-filmmakers in Scotland; Knowles (2020) explains that she ‘gravitated towards the networks that I knew and those networks were London-based.’ Over five days, Diversions comprised a generalist retrospective of the avant-garde, or ‘86 years of filmmaking in under two hours’; recent 16mm work by Noor Afshan Mirza and Brad Butler, Jayne Parker and Adam Kossoff amongst others; a fortieth anniversary review of May ’68 and its political avant-garde; a focus on New York; and retrospectives accorded to Devaux and Rose (Diversions Film Festival, 2008).

Concurrently, Knowles began advising on *Black Box* and by 2009 was given its full reign. By the time of the second Diversions (6–8 November 2009), Knowles was curating both whilst also teaching. With continued administrative support from the University of Edinburgh, Diversions 2009 was funded by £7,155 from Scottish Screen, supplemented by in-kind contributions of £3,600 from Filmhouse and £2,000 from National Galleries Scotland

(Scottish Screen, 2010, pp. 36, 37, 41). Like the previous edition, the festival drew upon the expertise of a close network: Curtis programmed a review of superimposition techniques; Light Cone presented recent catalogue additions; Sami van Ingen presented his expanded cinema event *Just One Kiss* (2009) and a profile of experimental moving image from Finland; and American artist-filmmaker Jeanne Liotta was accorded a retrospective (Diversions Film Festival, 2009).

Alongside these programmes, however, a special focus on Scotland reflected the festival's coincidence with the landmark exhibition *Running Time: Artists Films in Scotland 1960 to Now* at the Dean Gallery, Edinburgh (2009) (Gordon, 2009).¹⁰⁷ Knowles and exhibition co-curator Lauren Logan (née Rigby) convened a study day which included screenings of Matt Hulse's *Take Me Home* (1997) and Duncan Campbell's *Falls Burns Malone Fiddles* (2003) alongside presentations by Stephen Partridge, Francis McKee, George Clark, Dalziel + Scullion who were joined by Curtis and Bryony McIntyre in a concluding panel discussion (Diversions Film Festival and National Galleries of Scotland, 2009). The day was well-attended and 'undoubtedly provided a valuable and stimulating forum to pause and reflect on the current landscape,' Sarah Smith (2009) reported, but also struggled to unpack 'what precisely constitutes Scottish artists' or experimental film.' As the first such conference where a *history* of artists' moving image in Scotland might be negotiated, however, this event marked a new dimension to public debate which had long prioritised present support and resource. Augmenting the narratives produced in the exhibition's selection, Matthew Lloyd, then programming for The Magic Lantern, contributed a screening of Scotland-made work by 'practitioners trained in and dedicated to cinematic form, more akin to craftspeople or artisans than to visual artists' (Diversions Film Festival, 2009). *Pleasing Ourselves: Artisan Films in Scotland* included films by Margaret Tait, Enrico Coccozza and Eddie McConnell alongside contemporary work by Hulse and Sarah Tripp.¹⁰⁸ Where the exhibition had been organised around thematic concerns, this screening reflected instead the interstitial material reality of film production in Scotland, or the 'self-defined boundaries of both commercial film and visual art' (Diversions Film Festival, 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Renamed Modern Two at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in 2011.

¹⁰⁸ *Pleasing Ourselves: Artisan Films in Scotland* comprised: Margaret Tait, *Portrait of Ga* (1952); Enrico Coccozza, *Petrol* (1957); Ben Rivers, *Ah, Liberty!* (2006); Ben Ewart-Dean, *7 Primary School Spaces* (2008); Eddie McConnell, *Faces* (1959); Sarah Tripp, *Move Mood* (2009); Matt Hulse, *On Returning* (1990); and Margaret Tait, *Garden Pieces* (1998).

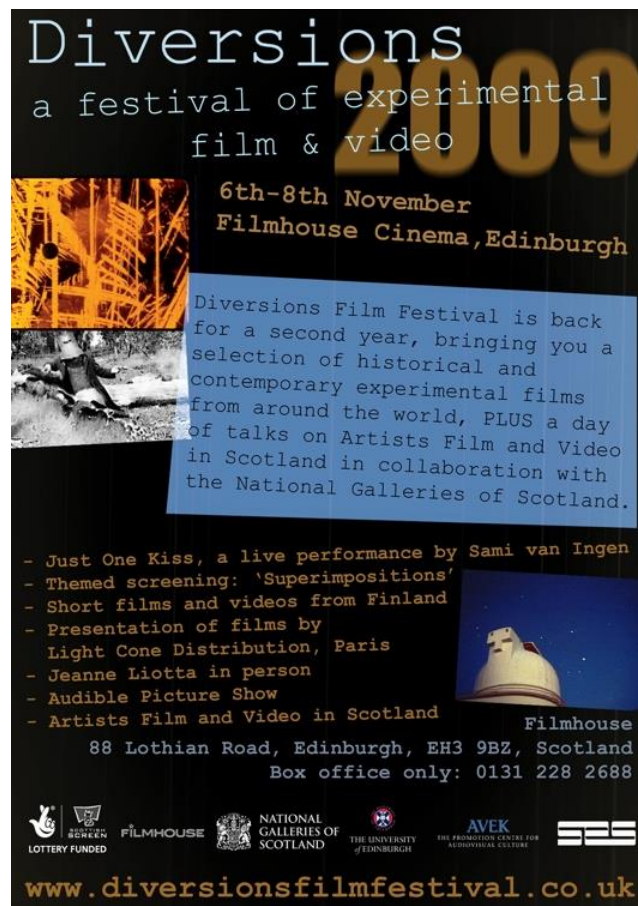


Figure 66: Diversions Film Festival (2009) [Flyer] Courtesy of Kim Knowles.

In brokering these discursive spaces, Diversions 2009 expanded its remit. With Knowles' university contract ending and her attention on the development of *Black Box*, the possibility of a third festival was a foregone conclusion (Knowles, 2020). At EIFF, Knowles (2020) explains that 'the programmes have always reflected my interests as a researcher over the years.' In recent years, since EIFF's seventieth edition in 2016, Knowles' focus has turned, she feels, towards a more reflexive awareness of the festival's own history in promoting the avant-garde, particularly under the stewardship of Lynda Myles in the 1970s. On the fortieth anniversary of *The International Forum on Avant-Garde Film* in 2016, Knowles collaborated with LUX Scotland on a screening and day-long discussion with speakers Laura Mulvey, William Raban and Lizzie Borden that sought to revisit these legacies.¹⁰⁹ Like Arika then, Knowles' programming evolved an increasingly interrogative relationship with the festival, as both an exhibition site and historiographic agent.

¹⁰⁹ See section 2.6.1.

5.2.3 Second wave festivalisation: Scotland + Venice (2003–) and GI (2005–)

By the mid-2000s, the Scottish cultural sector was undergoing what might be described as a second wave of festivalisation. In 2003 the country inaugurated its first national pavilion at the Venice Biennale whilst at home the Edinburgh Art Festival was minted in 2004, followed by the Glasgow Film Festival and Glasgow International in 2005. Evoking analyses of the neoliberal shift in cultural policy which followed Glasgow 1990, Fowler (2020) expresses his view of the pernicious effects of this paradigm upon artists in the 2000s:

The Scottish Government created this mandate for festivals, festivals, festivals, they put all their money into festivals, all the funding went into festivals and was removed from permanent organisations. So, now we have this festival culture and what that means is that people parachute in and they don't engage [...] it's about tourism and people siloed away in hotels and they're not engaging with the community here.

Though complicit by degrees to this kind of drive-by engagement, KYTN and Diversions had been highly specialised and accordingly modest in scale. The virtues of importing international participants, often showing for the first time in Scotland, arguably outweighed any discontent with their minimal local engagement. The same trade-off is less easily reconciled with festivalisation writ large, however, as in the cases of Scotland's flagship art events: Scotland + Venice and GI.

In 2003, the Scottish Arts Council and the British Council, supported by the Scottish Executive, partnered to present an exhibition and events programme involving twenty-eight artists and curated by Francis McKee and Kay Pallister at the Venice Biennale, marking the country's first entry as a national pavilion.¹¹⁰ Adjoining an exhibition of sculpture and installation at the Palazzo Giustinian-Lolin by Claire Barclay, Jim Lambie and Simon Starling, on its opening weekend, *Zenomap* (13 June – 2 November 2003) included a 92-minute programme of film and video by eight artists: Katy Dove (*You*, 2003); Graham Fagen (*Life Study (After Giorgione)*, 2003); Luke Fowler (*The Way Out*, 2003); Rob Kennedy (*walk and look and eat and lie and talk to you*, n.d.); Torsten Lauschmann (*Misshapen Pearl*, 2003); Duncan Marquiss (*Seelenzustande Land*, 2003); Rosalind Nashashibi (*Blood and Fire*, 2003); and Stephen Sutcliffe (*Wings*, 2003) (*The Herald*, 2003b; Sutcliffe, 2021). In the 2013 edition, Duncan Campbell's *It For Others* (2013)—which won him the 2014 Turner Prize—was presented alongside works by Corin Sworn and Hayley Tompkins, whilst successive solo

¹¹⁰ In 1990, sculptors David Mach, Arthur Watson and Kate Whiteford had shown outdoors at the Giardini.

presentations by Graham Fagen (2015), Rachel Maclean (2017), Charlotte Prodger (2019) have all centred video projects.

The selection of artists for Scotland + Venice expresses the project's aim to 'position Scotland internationally as a distinct, dynamic and diverse centre for creative excellence' (Scotland + Venice, n.d.). The proliferation of artists' moving image therein, exceeding the representation of all other media, demonstrates an irrefutable consensus amongst institutional partners as to the significance of the discipline. The means through which representation alone contributes to the development of a community beyond the commissionee, however, is not well communicated.

Much has been written about the extractive nature of the art biennial and the tension between its diplomatic or socio-economic function and meaningful engagement (Lauzon, 2011; Day and Edwards, 2012). Managed by Glasgow Life, the arms-length cultural administration of Glasgow City Council, GI began with a programme of 150 artists over twenty-nine exhibitions delivered in partnership with venues citywide (21 April – 2 May 2005) (e-flux, 2005). At its last full edition (20 April – 7 May 2018), this had grown to 190 artists, of whom 130 were Glasgow-based, dispersed over eighty exhibitions (Glasgow International, 2018). *In Kind* (2018), an action research project by Ailie Rutherford and Janie Nicoll, estimated the sum of unpaid artists' time given to that festival to be £1.6m, roughly equivalent to the income it purports to bring to the local economy (Creative Scotland, 2018). More than its expropriation of labour, however, Neil Clements (2021, pp. 11, 12) argues that GI has fundamentally altered the interface between Glasgow's artists and the international art world:

GI ensures the city instead takes its place amongst a scheduled sequence of global events that structure the curatorial calendar. [...] Glasgow's visual artists are in danger of reducing to short periods of time, largely for the edification of visitors rather than ourselves, a space of engagement that was once continuously operational.

Any discussion of contemporary art in Glasgow, and Scotland thereafter, particularly post-2010, I contend, must be predicated upon such an understanding of the compound ways in which GI has reformed cycles of production and exhibition, mirroring perhaps the effects of the Edinburgh Festivals on the performing arts in Scotland where, as cultural producer Morvern Cunningham (2020) has observed, 'the evolution of an intertwined interdependent structure of art and economics [...] has created the perfect conditions for exposing creative output to the economic forces of the market.' Much of the critique of festivalisation is underpinned by questions of who these initiatives ultimately serve. In GI's subsidisation by

Glasgow City Marketing Bureau and EventScotland, part of the national tourism board, an enduring subscription to the creative city strategy of Glasgow 1990 can easily be found.

Though GI's impact on artists' working environment has been profound, its relationship to the support of practice itself is rather more ambivalent. For the moving image specifically, representation has been found in an unwaveringly central position amongst programming. Under the founding directorship of McKee, GI prominently featured film and video work by Francis Alÿs (*When Faith Moves a Mountain*, 2002) in 2005; William Kentridge (various) in 2006; Catherine Yass (various) and Adel Abdessemed (various) in 2008. With Katrina Brown in post, Douglas Gordon (*24 Hour Psycho Back And Forth And To And Fro*, 2008) in 2010; Rosalind Nashashibi (*Lovely Young People*, 2012) and Henry Coombes (*I Am the Architect, This is Not Happening, This is Unacceptable*, 2012) in 2012. In the custody of Sarah McCrory, Bedwyr Williams (*Echt*, 2014), Charlotte Prodger (various) and Jordan Wolfson (various) in 2014; Amie Siegel (*Provenance*, 2013) in 2016. The moving image became even more central in Richard Parry's tenure, featuring Mark Leckey (*Nobodaddy*, 2018) in 2018; and Georgina Starr (*Quarantaine*, 2020), Gretchen Bender (*Total Recall*, 1987), Martine Syms (*SHE MAD SI:EA*, 2021), Alberta Whittle (*business as usual: hostile environment*, 2021) and Duncan Campbell (*o Joan, no...*, 2006) in 2021. Beyond exhibition alone, however, the extent to which GI has encouraged the development of practices and their attendant infrastructure in Scotland is less clear.

Discrete projects within its schedule have certainly leveraged the biennial's profile to advance critical engagements. For GI 2005 at Street Level Photoworks, for instance, Malcolm Dickson invited Sarah Felton and Su Grierson to curate *Invisible Fields* (15 March – 23 April 2005), a revisionist exhibition of moving image work by twelve women including Anne Bjerge Hansen and Rosalind Nashashibi. At the Tron Theatre, they coordinated an accompanying seminar, *Video>>Art>>Scotland* (22 April 2005), which surveyed the state of the medium, with contributions from Grierson, Dickson, McKee and Steven Bode (*The List*, 2005, p. 17; Dickson, 2020). For GI 2010, Dickson curated *Lost and Found* (Street Level Photoworks, 16 April – 30 May 2010) which restaged six installations from *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* and *Glasgow Events Space*.¹¹¹ During the exhibition, Fields & Frames'

¹¹¹ From *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic*, Tony Sinden, *Behold Vertical Devices* and from *Glasgow Events Space*, Stephen Littman, *Overseen, Overheard, Overlooked*; Stephen Partridge, *Interrun*; Pictorial Heroes, *Faction>Fragments>Divisions*; Zoë Redman, *She, Her, I*. Kevin Atherton contributed a new performance, *The Television – Repeat* (2010), which ingested clips from *Stand Up Television (Death in Glasgow)* (Street Level Photoworks, 2010).

1993 package *Passages* was screened at GMAC (21 April 2010) (Street Level Photoworks, 2010), thereby contributing to something of an abridged retrospective of video art from Scotland. In 2018, a new GI Collecting Award also went some way to addressing calls for more concerted forms of support, resulting in the acquisition of two videos: Winnie Herbstein's *Studwork* (2018) and Hardeep Pandhal's *Self-Loathing Flashmob* (2018), though this initiative has since been on hiatus (Bruce, 2021).

Whether a model of festival exhibition can be developed in Scotland that wholly eschews extractive practices whilst co-operating with a touristic vision of regeneration through culture remains to be seen. At smaller scale, the burgeoning reflexivity that emerged latterly at KYTN has prefigured the work of Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival (2010–) in the Scottish Borders town of Hawick, and the Artists' Moving Image Festival (2012–), launched at Tramway and co-produced with LUX Scotland since 2015. As critiques of festivalisation gained prominence in the 2010s, these festivals began to challenge orthodoxies around the value, sustainability and audience of this short-term, high-traffic exhibitionary model—expedited in no small part by the social effects of the COVID-19 lockdowns (2020–2021). Noting that their 'continued existence in a town of 14,000 people poses a significant challenge to urban-centric models of cultural and artistic provision,' Alchemy (n.d.) now works year-round, providing on-location artist residencies (*The Teviot, the Flag and the Rich, Rich Soil*, 2021–2022) and a long-term programme of community workshops (*Film Town*, 2019–) that supplement its five-day flagship festival. AMIF, meanwhile, has developed a structure of supported guest curation since 2016 which matches two Scotland-based artists, curators or writers—mostly unknown to each other—to catalyse new collaborations, reframing the festival as a form of public research.¹¹² In these ways, such festivals renounce a tourist-centred mission, becoming functions of organisations with a broader service ethic.

¹¹² Curated by Sarah Tripp and Ed Webb-Ingall in 2016; Laura Guy and Cara Tolmie, with Mia Edelgart, Deirdre J. Humphrys and Alberta Whittle in 2017; Mark Briggs and Naomi Pearce in 2018; Emmie McLuskey and Kimberley O'Neill, with Ima-Abasi Okon in 2019; and Adam Benmakhoulouf and Tako Taal in 2020/2021.

5.3 Institutional Reckonings

In the 2000s, with varying degrees of intention, the DIY scene had resolved to plug gaps in the support of artists working with the moving image; film festivals had emerged to import a diet of influential international theory and practice; and a new landscape of flagship events reflected the practice's assimilation within institutional programming. In the 2010s these disparate forces would be inherited by and reconciled through bespoke new organisations, evolving to provide year-round support, advocacy and exhibition services. The remainder of this chapter summarises these developments as tentative steps forward, identifying nodes in the present-day infrastructure of artists' moving image and mapping the social, political and economic conditions which continue to enable and contest the production of work today.

5.3.1 *Running Time: Artist Films in Scotland (2009)*

Running Time: Artist Films in Scotland (17 October – 22 November 2009), at the Dean Gallery represents the only reckoning with the history of artists' film and video in Scotland by a national institution, 'the first exhibition of its kind' (National Galleries of Scotland, 2009) and also the first exclusively devoted to moving image media at National Galleries Scotland (Logan, 2018). A long overdue five-week show, resource room, talks and screening programme featuring over seventy artists, in excess of 100 works were displayed over two screens and four monitors in a weekly rotating selection organised thematically: *Portraits in Action, Places in Time, Drama and Suspense, Sound and Vision, and Form in Motion*. Researched and curated by Rosie Lesso and Lauren Logan in consultation with various galleries and REWIND, the selection followed studio visits with artists in Glasgow and Dundee (Logan, 2018).

Spanning Eduardo Paolozzi's *History of Nothing* (1963), at its earliest, to a new commission by Torsten Lauschmann, installed at the entrance to the gallery and funded by the Scottish Arts Council, the chronological distribution of works leant towards the contemporary, with over two thirds of material having been produced in the previous five years.¹¹³ The selection

¹¹³ The participating artists were, in full: Beagles and Ramsay, Anne Bjerger Hansen, Sigga Bjorg Sigurdardottir, Martin Boyce, the Boyle Family, Roderick Buchanan, Steven Cairns, Aileen Campbell, Kim Coleman and Jenny Hogarth, Luke Collins, Phil Collins, Henry Coombes, Alan Currall, Dalziel + Scullion, Jason Dee, Maurice Doherty, Katy Dove, Will Duke, Gair Dunlop, Graham Fagen, Luke Fowler, GFM and Hassle Hound, Douglas Gordon, Stuart Gurden, Peter Haining (Attic Archive), David Hall, Ilana Halperin, Ronnie Heeps, Matt Hulse, Patrick Jameson, Rob Kennedy, Katharina Kiebacher, Tamara Krikorian, Jim Lambie, Torsten Lauschmann, Alastair MacLennan, Duncan Marquiss, Dani Marti, Mandy McIntosh, Craig Mulholland, Rosalind Nashishibi, Jason Nelson, Mark Neville, Annabel Nicolson, Ashley Nieuwenhuizen, Eduardo

was also conditioned by a fixed display apparatus and fast turnover, delimited by the convention of single-screen and digital/digitised presentation to the particular prohibition of multi-screen elements, Super 8 and 16mm projection or expanded cinema practice. As Logan (2018) explains, they sought to mix artists with disparate relationships to moving image media, some as primary users (David Hall, Rosalind Nashashibi, Smith/Stewart) and others within an interdisciplinary range (Jim Lambie, David Shrigley, Tatham and O’Sullivan).

Though never purporting to offer a definitive historical narrative—one review even offering that ‘there is a marked lack of self-reflexive theorising’ (Cumming, 2009)—the exhibition, unable to obfuscate its historicising effects, was subject to an irascible response from the press and artistic community. Ann Vance (2020) recognised a key omission of her peers:

You’ve got the artists that are included in the REWIND programme from Stephen Partridge, his cohort if you like—and then after that there came Malcolm [Dickson], Pictorial Heroes, myself, Louise Crawford, Gillian Steel, the Butler Brothers, the Cameron brothers, Paul and Kevin [...] that whole chunk is missing.

Further omissions are found in the generation working post-*Scotia Nostra*, gaining prominence around the new millennium: Sarah Tripp, Anne-Marie Copestake or Duncan Campbell. Conspicuously absent too are the patchwork of experimental filmmakers working concurrent to—often collaborating with—video artists in the 1970s and early 1980s: Lesley Keen, Jon Schorstein, Murray Grigor or John Samson, for instance.¹¹⁴ These exclusions perhaps speak to the ontological parameters of *artist films* as interpreted by organisers, which seem particularly attentive to work designed for gallery-based presentation.

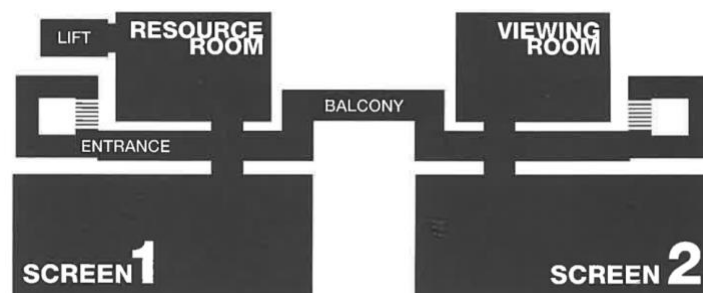


Figure 67: Floor plan in National Galleries of Scotland (2009) *Running Time: Artist Films in Scotland 1960 to Now*. [Programme brochure] Held at: Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive.

Paolozzi, Stephen Partridge, Jonny Reding, Ben Rivers, Kate V. Robertson, Paul Rooney, Maayke Schurer, Yann Seznec, David Sherry, David Shrigley, Smith/Stewart, Pernille Spence, Sam Spreckley, Elsa Stansfield and Madelon Hooykaas, Ian Stephen, Matt Stokes, Stephen Sutcliffe, Margaret Tait, Tatham and O’Sullivan, Hayley Tompkins, Zoe Walker and Neil Bromwich, Hugh Watt, Michael Windle and Zatorski and Zatorski (National Galleries of Scotland, 2009).

¹¹⁴ For a summary of this period, see section 2.3.3

More than this, however, the exhibition drew criticism for the significant compression it enacted: for critic Laura Cumming (2009), the selection was ‘puzzlingly variable,’ adding that ‘the projection is poor and the schedule changes every week.’ Rosalie Doubal (2009, p. 89) found that ‘by its very nature film saturates, and viewings of this scale don’t make for light work.’ Whilst any survey of time-based media contends with the possibility of time-limited viewership, these concerns were not successfully mitigated by the short interstitial run afforded to the exhibition. For comparison, a solo exhibition for Paul McCarthy which opened simultaneously ran for four months, whilst major summer exhibitions at the galleries are accorded six.¹¹⁵ Due to similar resource implications, no catalogue was produced (Logan, 2018). In this way, despite meeting expectations in receiving over 11,000 visitors, *Running Time* left little scholarly contribution. Worse still, it can be argued that the landmark nature of this exhibition, as purported in its marketing, has precluded successive attempts by a national institution at articulating the same history since.

Following the exhibition, only Luke Fowler’s *Pilgrimage from Scattered Points* (2006) was acquired directly, joined by Henry Coombes’ *The Bedfords* (2009) in 2015. Elsa Stansfield and Madelon Hooykaas’ *Running Time* (1979), which lent the exhibition its name, and several works by Peter Haining (The Attic Archive), were subsequently gifted to the collection (National Galleries Scotland, 2019). By 2009, only around seven moving image works had been acquired by NGS in the decade since Smith/Stewart’s video installation *Breathing Space* (1997) had entered the collection.¹¹⁶ In following years, however, this rate more than doubled (National Galleries Scotland, 2019). *Running Time*, then, coincided, if not having directly precipitated, an increased appetite for film and video within the galleries’ collecting policy, to the ultimate benefit of artists in Scotland.

Though *Running Time* hadn’t necessarily delivered the institutional reparations desired by the many stakeholders in the history it assembled, through its selection of contemporary artists, many recent graduates, it captured a snapshot of moving image media as it had entered common usage. In this way, through its *puzzling variability*, it offered an image of a complex and sprawling practice where counterparts like Kill Your Timid Notion or Diversions had not. That its only commissionee, Torsten Lauschmann, became the inaugural recipient of the

¹¹⁵ *Running Time* was succeeded by the popular *BP Portrait Award 2009* competition.

¹¹⁶ Bill Viola, *Surrender* (2001) in 2003; Rosalind Nashashibi, *Midwest* (2002) and *University Library* (2004) in 2004; Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2006) in 2006; Dalziel + Scullion, *Water Falls Down* (2001) and Nashashibi/Skaer, *Flash in the Metropolitan* (2006) in 2007; and Duncan Campbell, *Bernadette* (2008) in 2008.

Margaret Tait Award (MTA) months later certainly testifies to a perceptive assessment of the scene.

5.3.2 The Margaret Tait Award (2010–)

At a special screening of the films of Margaret Tait at the Glasgow Film Festival on Monday 8 March 2010, an award of £10,000 named in the filmmaker's honour was launched to 'recognise artists who are experimental, innovative and work within film and moving image media' (Glasgow Film Festival, 2010, p. 10). A partnership between GFF and LUX, sponsored by the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen, later merged into Creative Scotland (2010–), the Margaret Tait Award promised a novel platform for exhibition. From a shortlist comprising Aileen Campbell, Henry Coombes, Alexander and Susan Maris, and Sarah Tripp (LUX Scotland, 2020a), Lauschmann was announced as the first awardee and the following festival would present a new work for the Glasgow Film Theatre's 400-seat main screen, setting a precedence for the annual cycle, since established as a checkpoint in an artist's development.¹¹⁷ As the *Nothing Personal* ('Editorial,' 2021) journal explains,

Even being shortlisted, is a gateway to bigger and better things. It is a key checkpoint in the Glasgow art pipeline, sitting somewhere between an Intermedia show, a couple years on the Transmission or Market Gallery committee, a Cove Park Residency and, at the pinnacle, representing Scotland at the Venice Biennale.

In 2019, the award was increased to £15,000, and in 2020 the artists' fee was ringfenced separately (Anderson, 2021). Whilst this appropriately acknowledges a changing socio-economic environment, it is notable that these increases only now match the upper limit of the SAC and Scottish Screen's Artists' Film and Video Fund, introduced fifteen years earlier. It is important therefore that the MTA recognises a particular stage of practice, writ by the criteria that it acknowledges 'a significant body of work over the past 5–12 years.'¹¹⁸

Premiering in 2011, Lauschmann's site-specific commission *At the heart of everything is a row of holes*, was 'a logical progression from making video projections that are more like paintings' (Lauschmann paraphrased in Mantle, 2011, p. 2) and comprised a player piano, cymbal-banging monkey toy and £30,000 projector with a moving head, choreographed to

¹¹⁷ As of 2021, the completed Margaret Tait Award commissions include: Torsten Lauschmann, *At the heart of everything is a row of holes* (2011); Anne-Marie Copestake, *And Under That* (2012), Stephen Sutcliffe, *Outwork* (2013); Rachel Maclean, *A Whole New World* (2014), Charlotte Prodger, *Stonemollan Trail* (2015); Duncan Marquiss, *Evolutionary Jerks and Gradualist Creeps* (2016); Kate Davis, *Charity* (2017); Sarah Forrest, *April* (2018); Alberta Whittle, *between a whisper and a cry* (2019); and Jamie Crewe, *Ashley* (2020).

¹¹⁸ Reduced to five to ten years in 2020 (LUX Scotland, 2020a).

make use of the architecture of the whole auditorium. The work upended the formal conventions of theatrical viewing, exposing the codes and cues—curtains, lights, music—which structure the screening experience and collapsing together historical and contemporary automata, including the cinema’s own Digital Cinema Package (DCP) system, to produce a wry computational concert. For Fowler (2020), the work represented a turning point:

It was at those junctures where we started showing more in cinemas and making things specifically for cinemas with a cinematic quality, an awareness of that as—like the ratio, film ratios and surround sound protocols and DCPs and those sorts of things. [...] I was thinking about how to invert that and how to rupture those cinematic relations by having live elements.

Restaged as a midnight movie by LUX at the Rio Cinema, London (14 October 2011) and later revised for an NGS exhibition as part of the nationwide *GENERATION: 25 Years of Contemporary Art in Scotland* (2014) programme, *At the heart* has since been reconciled by institutional apparatus as something of a seminal work.

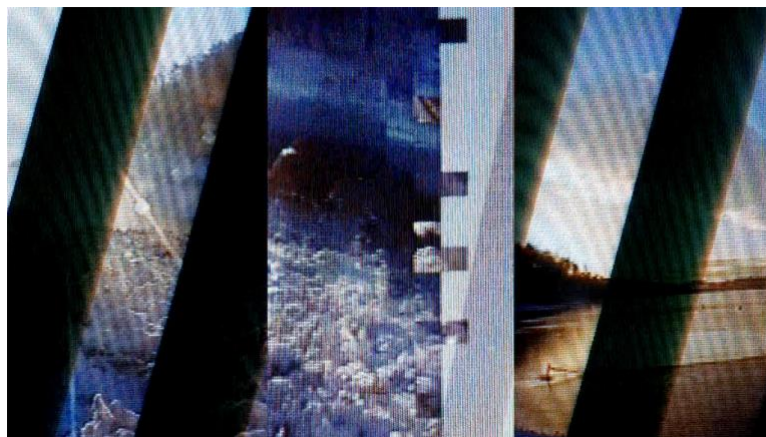


Figure 68: Prodger, C. (2015) *Stonemollan Trail*. [HD video] Courtesy of the artist, Kendall Koppe, Glasgow, and Hollybush Gardens, London.

As the MTA grew more established, its fundamental premise to commission work specifically for a festival premiere has increasingly been interpreted as an opportunity to retool artistic practice for the specificity of this distribution system and the grand film-theatrical exhibition environment. In the 2014/2015 cycle, for instance, recipient Glasgow-based Charlotte Prodger produced the digital single-screen work *Stonemollan Trail* (2015) which marked a significant pivot. Prodger had worked initially with 16mm film installation before developing a signature approach to video installation, fixing head-height cuboid Hantarex monitors onto fabricated steel stands with trailing cables, lending works an anthropomorphic presence as in *Max the Bull Terrier Trancing* (2014) and timed multiscreen

installations like *Northern Dancer* (2014). Here a precise spatial configuration, often in concert with sculptural components—a Sharp GF777 boombox, industrial PVC lorry curtains, custom plug socket coverings—co-produces the work’s meaning. For her MTA commission, Prodger shifted focus to the nonspecific screen of the cinema. As Erika Balsom (2018) explains,

In recent years, many artists with established practices in single-screen filmmaking have sought the expanded possibilities of multiscreen installation. Prodger represents a rare case of moving in the opposite direction, having made a decisive shift to the single-channel format with *Stonemollan Trail*.

In this way, the MTA facilitated a reorientation, establishing a productive ambivalence to venue that has enabled Prodger’s work to circulate more widely through channels of specialist film distribution, namely via LUX. The first in a would-be trilogy of single-screen works, *Stonemollan Trail* (2015) was followed by *BRIDGIT* (2016) which earned her the 2018 Turner Prize, and *SaF05* (2019) which represented Scotland at the Venice Biennale in 2019. Taking their namesakes—an historic coffin road on the west coast, a Neolithic feminine deity, and the last maned lioness documented in the Okavango Delta—as symbolic cores, each is orbited by fragments of autobiography, quotation and myth in the form of voice and image. Across these works, each particle articulates the other, atom-like, and in this way the film space might replicate the object theatre of her earlier installations.

For a number of artists, the MTA has enabled the production of their longest moving image work, as in Duncan Marquiss’s *Evolutionary Jerks and Gradualist Creeps* (2016), Sarah Forrest’s *April* (2018) or Alberta Whittle’s *between a whisper and a cry* (2019). For others, it has perhaps facilitated a more clearly narrative-led direction as in Jamie Crewe’s *Ashley* (2020), which invokes the genre of 1980s televised rural folk horror to visualise a certain experience of transness (Crewe, 2020). Marking a departure from Lauschmann’s playful provocation, it is easy to discern, by degrees, a growing emulation of commercial models of film production and exhibition amongst recent commissions.¹¹⁹ Just as the parameters of single-screen, digital display for *Running Time* produced only a partial image of film and video practice in Scotland, in anticipating their cinematic premiere, I contend, the MTA commissions risk reproducing similar conventions. As perhaps the only consistent platform

¹¹⁹ Commissions typically adhere to a standard of single-screen, high definition 16:9 colour display in a digital video format with a runtime of between twenty and fifty minutes. Since 2015, most have employed a collaborative approach to production, variously enlisting professional photography, sound design, voice artists or performers, ostensibly positioning the artist as director.

through which a wider public and press interface with artists' moving image in Scotland, its prestige, I add, risks inferring that artistic development necessitates proximity to *professional* approaches. Like any award, the MTA produces an index of consensus over time drawn by its administrators, their selection of jurors and the network from which nominations are solicited. Ahead of Prodger's premiere, the newly founded agency LUX Scotland (2014–) took custody of the award and as a flagship activity, its identity has since been constituted in close association with this organisation.

5.3.3 LUX Scotland (2014–)

The need for an agency for the support of artists' moving image in Scotland had been expressed periodically over the measure of decades, with successive generations since the 1970s failing to organise the appropriate resources to propagate this desire.¹²⁰ Years in development, the forestory of LUX Scotland, like these antecedents, would at first seem similarly beleaguered. As its founding director, Mason Leaver-Yap (2020) explains, after working for *MAP*, they moved to London, programming live events as part of the year-long exhibition project *Nought to Sixty* (2008) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts. 'A few people took me under their wing, in terms of the projection of film and staging of moving image as a communal event' they explain: 'Stuart Comer, who was the curator at the Tate, was putting on incredible programming and was always kind and helpful; Ian White, I worked with fairly frequently and had a really good relationship with; Benjamin Cook and Mike Sperlinger.'

In around 2009, Leaver-Yap began to discuss the possibility of a LUX outpost in Glasgow with Cook as LUX had been limited in their ability to organise in Scotland due to devolved arts funding. These conversations were forced into a four-year hiatus when Leaver-Yap moved to New York, working itinerantly as a writer, curator and projectionist until 2013. 'Before I moved back I called Ben and said, "look, I'm moving to Glasgow, should we revisit this conversation"' (Leaver-Yap, 2020). With renewed purpose—successive LUX Scotland Director Nicole Yip (2019) notes that 'the advent of the 2014 Scottish Referendum also brought new urgency to the proposition'—Cook and Leaver-Yap began a process of scoping and consultation. Securing £30,000 in pilot support from Creative Scotland and Glasgow Life for one-year, the duo organised a public meeting at Tramway on 30 May 2014 to outline the

¹²⁰ See discussion of *The Future of Video in Scotland* symposium in 1976 (section 2.4.2), *Video Day* in 1984 (section 3.2.1), or the ill-fated Moving Image Art Agency (section 4.3).

intentions of the new agency, LUX Scotland (Yip, 2019; Leaver-Yap, 2020). On top of consolidating LUX's existing commitments in Scotland—the Margaret Tait Award, Artists' Moving Image Festival at Tramway and LUX Critical Forum, an artist-led monthly discussion group—the new objectives of this organisation were slated as:

The establishment a new distribution collection of artists' moving image work produced in Scotland; a new professional support programme for Scottish artists working with the moving image (which will include workshops, courses, funding and residency opportunities); new touring and screening initiatives in collaboration with arts venues across Scotland; new support structures for artists' moving image production and new public research resources. (LUX Moving Image, 2014)

The organisation relied on a lot of goodwill early on. Its first office was shared with Glasgow International at Trongate 103 and, in a familiar refrain, as Leaver-Yap (2020) remembers, 'it was all beg-borrowed. I was using my own laptop. We didn't have money for a phone line [...] All of the infrastructure that a new organisation would need sat on the back of LUX.'

In its first year, LUX Scotland undertook a nationwide touring programme, *Where I Am* (2015), named after Tait's *Where I Am Is Here* (1964), which sought to unearth histories of artists' moving image in Scotland, adapted and augmented with respect to each of its six locations.¹²¹ In Stromness, connections were mapped between Tait and Lauschmann, Prodger and Florrie James (LUX Scotland, 2015c). In Dundee, a roundtable event reconsidered 1984–1991 as 'an overlooked era of artists' video' including a profile Daniel Reeves (LUX Scotland, 2015d). A summative screening in Edinburgh brought together disparate narratives via Annabel Nicolson's *Frames* (1973), Tina Keane's *Shadow of a Journey* (1980), Katy Dove's *Motorhead* (2002) and Duncan Marquiss's *Midgie Noise* (2008) (LUX Scotland, 2015b). Leaver-Yap (2020) remembers that, 'looking at where the Scottish art scene was with its understanding of what moving image was, there needed to be a lot of very basic groundwork that we need to cover.'

In 2015, LUX Scotland also produced a touring programme at the invitation of the British Council. *CABAC New Moving Image from Scotland* (8–10 April 2015) comprised six works by Marquiss, Prodger, Dennis and Debbie Club, Rob Kennedy, Kari Robertson and Stina Wirfelt, screening at venues in Toronto and Montreal (LUX Scotland, 2015a). This set a precedence for semi-annual international showcases of work from Scotland, sponsored by the

¹²¹ ATLAS, Portree, Isle of Skye; Taigh Chearsabhagh, Lochmaddy, Isle of North Uist; Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, Orkney; Dundee Contemporary Arts; Highland Institute for Contemporary Art, Inverness-shire; and Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh.

British Council, including *Antiphon* at the 2016 Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India (3–7 March 2017) which again featured profiles of Marquiss and Prodder, alongside Margaret Salmon's debut feature *Eglantine* (2016) and works by Dove, Forrest, Lauschmann, Adam Lewis Jacob and Jane Topping (LUX Scotland, 2017). The following year, *We Suffer to Remain* at the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (22 March – 29 July 2018) considered Scottish and British colonial histories in the wake of the Conservative party's *hostile environment* policy, extending from an exhibition of Graham Fagen's video installation *The Slave's Lament* (2015), originally commissioned for Scotland + Venice (LUX Scotland, 2018).¹²²

Amongst its core concerns have been the development of a learning programme and free membership network, SUPERLUX (2015–). LUX Scotland has variously organised industry-focused workshops on distribution, working with festivals, production, 16mm filmmaking, sound design, editing and through this network coordinates travel bursaries, one-to-one advice sessions and masterclasses with international artist-filmmakers including Rose Lowder, Sky Hopinka, Kevin Jerome Everson and Beatrice Gibson.

I worked as LUX Scotland's Project Coordinator for eighteen months, April 2017 – September 2018, and have remained a Research Associate in name since. What now follows, therefore, benefits and is partially constructed from this anecdotal experience. The scope of the organisation has augmented under successive directorships. Through their programming, Leaver-Yap (2020) articulated a strong aesthetic conviction; the 'love of the materiality of film, structural film, developing your own,' they explain, 'that was never my interest, it was my suspicion. I feel like it's a privilege to be interested in formal questions as opposed to really thinking through political content on a social level.' Screening historical work by filmmakers like Stuart Marshall, Black Audio Film Collective and Jack Smith, LUX Scotland has promoted a certain approach to the exclusion of others.¹²³ Leaver-Yap (2020) reconciles this in arguing that 'LUX Scotland isn't set up for people who don't need help, it's set up for things which may be more challenging to make under the social conditions or the economic conditions.' This house-style, I suggest, remains a persistent critique of LUX Scotland, owing perhaps to its predominant operation in metropolitan centres. Following her appointment in September 2016, however, Nicole Yip installed an expansive and prolific programming

¹²² The four-part programme to which included Maud Sulter's *Plantation* (1994), discussed in section 4.3, alongside works by Black Audio Film Collective, Keith Piper, Isaac Julien and a number of contemporary artists.

¹²³ Such as expanded cinema or performance-oriented practices.

ethos, developing regular strands outwith the central belt, brokering artist exchanges and initiating a series of discursive public fora concerning the development of a collection of artists' moving image in Scotland.¹²⁴ Since September 2019, Kitty Anderson has sought to enhance opportunities for critical discussion and support, strengthening commitments to inclusion and mitigating against the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic through online strands like *One Artist / One Work* (2020–), which provides space for deeper engagement with individual practices.

Despite producing hundreds of successful events and projects since its formation—I recorded eighty-five discrete public activities in its 2017/2018 annual funding evaluation—LUX Scotland has persistently faced precarity and at the time of writing is still funded on a year-to-year basis. Unable to invest in longer, multi-year developments under these terms, such conditions have circuitously impeded the organisation's ability to cultivate assets such as a collection or permanent space which would make it less dispensable and, through potential income generation, less reliant on public subsidy alone. Around 40% of LUX's revenue in London, for instance, comes from hires of work in its collection (Anderson and Cook, 2021). The negotiation that LUX Scotland, in concert with the many other nodes in the production and exhibition infrastructure of artists' moving image in Scotland, are now charged with making, I argue, is simply for Creative Scotland and its recently established subsidiary Screen Scotland (2018–) to reflect their own findings and represent the measure that over 40% of visual artists work with moving image media (Creative Scotland, 2016, p. 9) within the distribution of its funding for individuals and cultural organisations.

¹²⁴ Including regular screenings at Eden Court, Inverness, and the Belmont Cinema, Aberdeen.

Conclusion

6.1 Towards a summary

What can be taken from this survey of a practice in seemingly endless transition, trailed by an infrastructure perennially trying to keep up? As it arrives today, artists' moving image negotiates anew with the screen, the dominant means of communication. It benefits from an immediacy in which, distinguished from the plastic arts, it is released from aesthetic tradition. What use, then, is history to this of-the-moment expression? What I hope to have provided here is a catalogue of dissent, of voices and those who advocated for them that offer models for the creative navigation of contexts—social, economic and political—which have systemically undervalued and inhibited them. In exposing the compound conditions under which artists' have produced and exhibited in Scotland over fifty years, I hope to have articulated a holistic context in which many works deserving of retrieval, conservation, study and appreciation can be framed, their specificities better understood alongside and apart from existing historiography.

In the 1970s, we saw how a generation of promoters including Richard Demarco, Tamara Krikorian, Tom McGrath and Lynda Myles worked despite press disinterest and a paradigm of social conservatism to import radical ideas about film and video into the country's first progressive galleries and festivals. Regardless of meagre available resource, we saw how a diverse filmmaking community began to ossify around a mutual condition of *independence*, smuggling ekphrastic work through policy loopholes and challenging the invisible pipelines to provision which had underwritten the avant-garde aesthetic elsewhere. In the 1980s, we saw how the Scottish Film Production Fund's tentative introduction of public film and video subsidy propagated a novel body of work in experimental animation, comic videodramas and post-industrial agitprop. New departments at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and The Glasgow School of Art, led by radical instructors and equipped with unrivalled workshop facilities, trained a new generation. In turn, these artists populated self-organising initiatives like Transmission and EventSpace, programming ambitious exhibitions and events—furnished by the bespoke critical infrastructure of *Variant*—from which emerged voices like Pictorial Heroes, intercepting the institutional status quo.

Riding the wave of Glasgow 1990 and its shift in cultural policy, artists' film and video writ large via digital projection promised spectacle and controversy for a new breed of institutions like Tramway. The artist-led scene found its full articulation in the festival model via New

Visions whilst a productive strand of broadcast commissioning, First Reels, supplied new work from Scotland. By the late 1990s, a burgeoning deadlock between the prerogatives of art and industry spelled an unceremonious end to both. In the new millennium, however, democratised technologies and new emphases on interdisciplinarity inspired a DIY revival in initiatives like Flourish Nights and the Open Eye Club. A movement towards historic reappraisal informed the mission of Diversions Film Festival and Kill Your Timid Notion. Finally, buoyed by the work of generations, the moving image found itself assimilated within the programming and collections of institutions nationwide, supported by a specialised award, the Margaret Tait Award, and support agency, LUX Scotland.

Despite the shape of this account, in its suggestion of progress, all but a scant minority of moving image artists are able sustain themselves within the Scottish arts environment via their practice alone. The hostility of production conditions for artists in Scotland has been ripe for exacerbating social inequalities. Whilst women represent 68% of workers in the visual arts sector, those who spend more than thirty-five hours on their work earn 56% less than men (Creative Scotland, 2016, p. 32). Ethnic minorities are also underrepresented; amongst the organisations regularly funded (RFO) by Creative Scotland, none employed ethnic minorities in senior leadership roles (Creative Scotland, 2016, p. 33). Those living in areas ranked lowest in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation consistently show lower levels of attendance and participation in cultural activity (Creative Scotland, 2016, p. 34). These findings betray any vision that we have arrived at a healthy infrastructure.

It is also important to reflect on, though perhaps impossible to measure, the extent to which these exclusions are perpetuated by the history I have set forth. Despite endeavours to actively retrieve marginalised voices, my account also reveals a primacy of white, male practitioners, felt most acutely until the 1990s but enduring even still. A concerted revision of these narratives with greater attention on the role of working-class, LGBTQIA+ and ethnic minority groups in particular would be a welcome augmentation of this text. More too could be written about aesthetics, the production of individual works, the influence of workshops, or how artists' film and video has dealt with a Scottish self-image, none of which could be fully articulated here. This thesis represents only one possible outcome of the archival and interview-based research undertaken, and it is hoped these materials, now gathered, can find ongoing utility in future publishing, advocacy and curatorial work, by myself or others.

To hazard such new routes, whilst undertaking this research I established the open-access online and print serial *DOWSER, notes on artists' moving image in Scotland* (2020–) with support from the British Art Network, Alchemy Film & Arts, and the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities' Engagement Funding. Attempting to collate and make public a new set of resources, *DOWSER* publishes new writing commissions, interviews and archival materials on the expanded subject of artists' moving image in Scotland. Drawing new voices and textual registers to the underpopulated field, the project has sought to generate a more polyvocal account, considering the nuanced interactions of place, politics, race, gender and queerness within and around film and video from Scotland.¹²⁵ It is my ambition that these texts might form a small resistance to collective amnesia and a primer to many more future endeavours. With the hope of influencing future policy, elements of this research have also been extracted to provide a historical overview of resource in transition for the forthcoming sectoral report *A Review of Artists' Film and Moving Image in Scotland* (2022), independently undertaken by Adam Pugh and Gary Thomas, commissioned by Creative Scotland.

¹²⁵ To date, contributors to *DOWSER* have included curator Helen Nisbet (*These are the stones we have instead of trees*, 2020); archivist Adam Lockhart (*Circuits, Reels and Actions: Artists' Moving Image in 1970s Edinburgh*, 2020); artists Jasleen Kaur and Alia Syed (*Jugalbandi*, 2021); animator Lesley Keen (*A Persistent Vision*, 2021); curator Seán Elder (*_BEATING_*, 2021); Alan Robertson, Chris Byrne, Malcolm Dickson and Ann Vance (*3 Variant Texts*, 2022); and Naomi Gessesse (*Dreaming a Black Scottish Archive*, 2022).

6.2 Epilogue: how do we solve a problem like artists' moving image in 2021?

To my interviewees I posed a future-facing question, soliciting speculation from artists, filmmakers, curators and educators on what artists' moving image in Scotland needs to *enhance its profile* or *become more sustainable*. Responses were diverse, at times contradictory, at others corroborative. 'It's never had a bad image,' Luke Fowler (2020) counters, 'what we really need are cash injections into the community. We need cheap housing and subsidised studios, a place where we can put things on and we can show things.' Gillian Steel (2020) agrees, 'I think dedicated spaces for a start, not just in the big cities but in smaller towns and there's just no getting away from it, but it needs some kind of funding that doesn't depend on income generation.' Ann Vance (2020) augments the same refrain, 'a dedicated space really, where works could be digitised, where we can create an archive and distribution, [...] where there is a bank of equipment for lending, for hiring.'

Access proves a corollary issue. Owing to its inherent material condition of 'not existing until it's there being presented,' for Stephanie Smith (2020) there is an ongoing challenge in the visibility of artists' moving image work; she asks 'is there a means through which you can access work more easily?' For Sam Ainsley (2021) an answer might be found in, 'I hate the word festival, but a festival of moving image. [...] It needs to have a bigger audience and it needs to have a wider audience and it needs to be shown in the way that the artist envisaged it.' For others, festivalisation proves the very source of a structural problem. Kim Knowles (2020) offers that 'there are platforms for seeing work, perhaps too many [...] clustered together almost sitting on top of each other, fighting for the same films.' Instead, she wonders where 'experimental film or artists' film is being taught and encouraged.' Whilst, as Fowler (2020) sees it, 'you have these extremely rich festivals and then everyone else is just completely poor, it has totally stratified the art scene, I don't think there's anything to be positive about what we've created over the last ten years.'

Though individual propositions vary, they ultimately emanate from a shared plea for resource, for concerted investment in processes of production, through circulation, exhibition and into preservation. 'Money,' Mason Leaver-Yap (2020) answers succinctly, elaborating:

I think it has everything else. It has been producing despite or in spite of the lack of money. I don't know how that money is going to come by or where the Government will get the confidence to do that. I feel like it's shown again and again that it's got a huge profile and talent. [...] Just because you're good doesn't mean you're good enough to earn a living here.

Parsing through these views, drawn from diverse professional and historical experiences within a complex and heterogenous field, it is clear that existent functions of cultural policy—the routes through which resource is disbursed—are not meeting the needs of working artists. The financing of artists' moving image, as Erika Balsom (2016) identifies in her book-length study, is both an historical and contemporary quandary, as yet to find a scalable resolution in any geographic context. Between the distribution models of the limited edition, sold to collections, and the unlimited hire, recouping royalties from each screening, artists' moving image has rarely produced a net profit for its makers. In Scotland, where neither a mature commercial art sector nor a specialised national distributor exists, it is rarer still for either of these methods to sustain an artistic practice.

The correlation between public subsidy, cultural impact and the sustainability of moving image practices is, however, irrefutable. To close this study, in the intimation of a future direction, I offer one salient model in the historic case of Duncan Campbell's *Bernadette* (2008). A remarkable portrait of the Irish dissident and political activist Bernadette Devlin which troubles the efficacy of documentary mediation, Campbell's 16mm film benefitted from a moment when Scottish arts funding was at its most generous and risk-taking, immediately prior to the caesura of the 2007/2008 financial crisis, from which arts spending has never recovered.¹²⁶ In September 2007, Campbell was awarded £15,000 from the Scottish Arts Council for its production (Scottish Arts Council, n.d.). An edition was purchased for £4,000 by the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in 2008 (National Galleries Scotland, n.d.), with further copies acquired by the Museum of Modern Art (object: W24276) and Tate (object: T12966). The film has been accorded exhibitions at the Irish Museum of Modern Art and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, screened at the renowned International Film Festival Rotterdam (2009), was featured in *British Art Show 7* (2010), and is available for hire via LUX. For a subsequent film, *It For Others* (2013)—in many ways an aesthetic descendent—Campbell received the 2014 Turner Prize. It is reasonable to infer that the SAC's investment in the production of this single work has been matched and exceeded by the income generated in the film's circulation. This subsidy has therefore directly and indirectly augmented the reach, profile and long-term sustainability of the artist, his work and the reputation of moving image made in Scotland; *Bernadette* offers an efficient testimony of

¹²⁶ Between 1998/1999 and 2006/2007, the SAC's grant-in-aid and expenditure increased at an annual average rate of 10%. In 2007/2008 grant-in-aid fell by 25% and expenditure by 28%. By 2014/2015, grant-in-aid funding was still 9.1% lower and expenditure 18% lower than in 2006/2007 (Dempsey, 2016, pp. 8–9).

the generative potential of cultural subsidy. Provided with even a mere restoration of this domestic infrastructure, I suggest, the manifold rewards of such support might be extended further. In surveying five decades of inspiring and radical voices, I hope to have exceeded justification for such action. To retrieve, replay and adapt just one memorable diagnosis (Adams, 1975): *the time is ripe, many artists say, for concerted action now.*

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Appendices

The following transcripts represent the fourteen interviews conducted for this thesis between January 2020 and March 2021. Verbatim transcripts were produced by the author from audio recordings and then edited with interviewees who approved the abridged versions presented here. Interviews conducted prior to the onset of the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020 were in-person, mitigated thereafter by taking place over online platforms.

- A. Sam Ainsley, Zoom, 2 March 2021
- B. Malcolm Dickson, Zoom, 22 May 2020
- C. Charles Esche, Skype, 24 April 2020
- D. Barry Esson and Bryony McIntyre, Skype, 15 June 2020
- E. Luke Fowler, Skype, 21 April 2020
- F. Lesley Keen, The Glad Café, Glasgow, 31 January 2020
- G. Kim Knowles, Skype, 6 March 2020
- H. Mason Leaver-Yap, Grain & Grind, Glasgow, 6 February 2020
- I. Lucy McKenzie, Mimi's Bakehouse, Edinburgh, 7 February 2020
- J. Stephanie Smith, Stow Building, The Glasgow School of Art, 18 February 2020
- K. Gillian Steel, Skype, 5 June 2020
- L. Alia Syed, Skype, 28 May 2020
- M. Sarah Tripp, Zoom, 17 May 2020
- N. Ann Vance, Zoom, 29 June 2020

A. Sam Ainsley

Marcus Jack: To start, could you tell me just about when you moved to Glasgow?

Sam Ainsley: Well, it's complicated, because I first moved to Scotland in 1976. But I think it was 1981 when I moved to Glasgow, and that's when I got my first one day a week job at The Glasgow School of Art.

MJ: And what course was that teaching onto?

SA: Well, thereby hangs a tale. It was the department that preceded Environment Art, and it was called Murals and Stained Glass. But nobody did murals, and only one person did stained glass. So, it was a complete misnomer and basically, it was a kind of catch all place for all the oddbods who didn't fit into painting or sculpture or you know, any of the normal courses. It was the forerunner of Environmental Art, but that didn't start up until 1985 when David Harding arrived.

MJ: Do you remember any of the students on the mural course?

SA: Well, I remember lots of them, but none of them worked in film or video until Environmental Art began.

MJ: Could you tell me how involved you were in the setting up of that course? And maybe looking beyond GSA, as well, and what was happening in the rest of Scotland: how did it fit in amongst all of that?

SA: Well, the murals department had been really open in the sense of media and concept and everything else, but it was completely chaotic. What David did when he came is to give some structure to the whole Environmental Art course. One of the things that we agreed on was that each student should get a kind of workshop in various areas, to see where their interests lay. So, one of the things we did early on was do a two-week workshop with the people from Glasgow Film and Video Workshop which got a lot of people interested. But at that time, we had next to nothing in the way of equipment. We were in the girls' high, the old Glasgow High School for Girls and I think we had like one computer and a photocopier. That was the sum total of our equipment. But that little niche thing, which was run by Paul Maguire and John Shankie blossomed into what later became Electronic Media, which is where all the film and video work was made and it's still running in GSA.

One of the things we did very early on was, I can't remember what it was called, but it was the Arts Council of England that had a sort of offshoot film resource, which lent out films and videos—well, more films—to art schools. More or less every week, or every couple of weeks, we'd rent one of these films and show it to the students. So, it could be films *by* artists, it could be films *about* artists, or it could be classic movies that we wanted the students to see. One of the ones I got was *In the Realm of the Senses* [1976] by Nagisa Ōshima, to show to the students. You won't probably know the film, but at one stage this woman cuts off a man's penis and Douglas Gordon went green and keeled over in the midst of showing this. We had great, great films to show the students. You know a lot were just shorts. We showed all the Norman McLaren ones we could get our hands on, Maya Deren, you know, lots of classic artists' films. And as I say, the students had a workshop. But it did mean at that time that if they wanted to make video they had to go to [Glasgow] Film and Video Workshop.

MJ: Do you remember where that was?

SA: Well, my earliest memory is of it being in—just up from the Tron, it was next to Project Ability. I think it was Albion Street? The Film and Video workshop might have also at one stage had a sort of toehold in Street Level, the photography gallery, before it moved, before it went to its current address.

One of the big things that happened, and this was much later, was that I managed to get a big grant from the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation for the Electronic Media Department. And that's when we were in the Barnes Building. I think it was £30,000. That really equipped what now has grown and grown as more and more money became available. That made a huge difference to our students' ability to make their own work.

MJ: When would that have been, do you remember?

SA: There are people you can ask you will definitely know, people like Hugh Watt and Harald Turek who are in there, and also John Shankie, who was there. In fact, he and I worked on the grant together. It might have been early 1990s, something like that.

There was a big exhibition, you might know about it, called *New Art in Scotland*. At the CCA, and it was in three parts: painting, sculpture and video. All of the video work in it—I think all of it—was either Environmental Art or MFA students, people like Smith/Stewart, Alan Currall, Ross Sinclair, people like that.

MJ: That would have been 1994.

SA: Yeah. I think that catalogue is still available, you know, which has got some great essays in it about how people used to just play around in their bedrooms, making art. That was where a lot of early video work came from, you know, people having a kind of cheap video camera and just trying things out.

MJ: Cycling back a bit, when you were showing the students these films, where did your own knowledge come from?

SA: I did my foundation year in Jacob Kramer College in Leeds, which is now Leeds Arts University and we had a great foundation year. It was a requirement that every Wednesday night we watch a classic film. That could be anything from Buñuel, to Tarkovsky to the Marx Brothers and then the next morning we had to draw a scene from that film: really crazy and difficult. One of the tutors used to give lunchtime record recitals of avant-garde music from Black Mountain College and so on. So, that was my first introduction to something other than the kind of films that you saw at the cinema. It became very influential actually, because I became a real cinema addict.

MJ: I wonder at that time in the mid-1980s, when this was starting up, do you remember what else was going on in Glasgow, any film and video stuff?

SA: Well, it was very political time because of the Poll Tax, Margaret Thatcher, a lot of punk still about. It was kind of unsettled, I would say. And the students were making a lot of work with quite a political edge to it. The first generation of Environmental Art were people like Douglas Gordon, Ross Sinclair, Christine Borland, Nathan Coley, Jackie Donachie, Roddy Buchanan. There was a *strong* sense of being part of a community, a group who had shared ideals.

MJ: Yeah, that's really interesting. And they would have graduated in the late 1980s then?

SA: Yeah, yeah.

MJ: So, you started on the Sculpture and Environmental Art course in 1985—

SA: Sculpture and Environmental Art didn't come together until much, much later. So Environmental Art was always a separate course. The emphasis was on context. Students had to do a public art project every term or every year in the city of Glasgow, which was influenced by the site, documented on the site, critiqued on the site. And which was filmed. When we moved to the girls' high school, David had his office broken into and all his VHS tapes stolen. Could you believe that? I couldn't believe it. So, they were probably taped over by whoever nicked them. It was the record of all the public art projects from then, we were just devastated. I've got quite a lot of work on DVD that's been given to me by students over the years, but mostly from much later than that.

MJ: So what year was the MFA started up?

SA: 1990 was the first graduating year group and several, in fact, quite a few people from Environmental Art went on to do the MFA programme.

MJ: Yeah, there was a strong connection there between the two. What did you find different about doing the MFA?

SA: Well, at least in the beginning, Environmental Art students mostly came from the west of Scotland, mostly working-class kids, who were supported financially, they got grants, they got fees paid. It was a golden era of free education. When the MFA started, we got students from across the UK at first, and then internationally as its reputation grew. There was a bigger cultural mix, I think, on the MFA. Still is.

MJ: Do you think that that more diverse mix of people has any effect on the work?

SA: Well, certainly people on the course, or at least we always hoped that each year group would form a distinctive cohort, where they would influence each other, discuss with each other, debate with each other, critique each other's work. So, they were learning at least as much from their colleagues as they were from tutors. Some of those friendships are still ongoing today, you know, which is fantastic. In fact, all of our international shows on the MFA, of which there were many, came about because one of our MFAs was from that country. We showed in China, we showed in New York, we showed in Mexico, we showed in Holland, you know, the list goes on. So, in that sense it was very important that we looked outward, that we didn't restrict it.

But, it had its backlash because when GSA decided to expand the number of postgraduate courses in fine art, architecture and design, we lost a lot of our scholarships from the Scottish Education Department. So, whereas in the past, we were able to give five or six or even seven scholarships to Scottish students, when I left we were down to one. And of course, the art school was continually on at us to get more international students in because they paid such high fees. That was the downside, the upside was the cultural mix, the downside was the disadvantage to Scottish students. I don't know what we can do about it except get sponsorship. I mean, I managed to get money from various sources to provide scholarships

for Scots but they were short term, might be for two or three years. So yeah, it's a difficult one, a balancing act.

MJ: Do you think because of that there's been a change in the way that graduates would still relate to the course or whether having fewer Scots on the course means that less happens afterwards?

SA: Well, you have to remember that the Government decided that people couldn't stay after two years if they were from another country. Where once people from all over the world used to stay to work in Glasgow, as artists, that situation went. People had to leave unless they had some really good reason for being here or could prove they earned ridiculous amounts of money. So, that was a big change. Because at one stage the cultural mix in the wider art scene was more international, but a lot of people had to go home. And of course, what they did was take the Glasgow model back to their home country and basically copy it.

MJ: What year did you stop teaching on the MFA?

SA: I think it was 2006, and I then did a couple of years of visiting teaching in the painting department, which is my area. Just one day week.

MJ: So, in the whole span of from 1985 to 2006—that's twenty years or so—what significant changes did you see in the work that people were making?

SA: Well, as you know, there is very little in the way of contemporary art buying in Scotland, in Glasgow, and few galleries actually dealing with real contemporary art as opposed to saleable stuff. Because artists of those courses, Environmental Art and MFA, didn't really expect to sell, they were completely free to experiment and innovate. So, they often made completely mad works that, you know, weren't saleable basically. I remember Eddie Stewart took up the floor in one of the studios in the girls' high and gouged out a woodblock print, and then installed the whole floor in the Macintosh museum, much to the dismay of The Glasgow School of Art. There was just a fantastic energy and commitment on the part of artists to make work despite the fact that there was little support and little interest even. Then people started having success, nationally and internationally, and that drove the next generation, even if it reacted against the work that had gone before. They were still quite proud of the fact that people could continue to live and work in Glasgow and not have to move to New York or London or whatever. So, the work I think, was very fresh and innovative and very deeply felt and carefully thought about and people had a decent grant, at least at the beginning, to afford materials. [phone rings] What was the question again? What were the changes? Well, as more international students came, they came with more money. They were able to buy more expensive materials or make more ambitious work in terms of finance.

MJ: When would you say that that shift started to happen, when people were more aware of the market and these other forces?

SA: That's difficult. Because when Douglas had his *24 Hour Psycho* show [1993] at Tramway, and then had been to the Slade and got international attention, that was just the beginning of—well, first of all, there was the Glasgow Boys, figurative painters Ken Currie and all—and then I suppose the Environmental Art department was a bit of a backlash against what they called *brown paintings*. So, all of the work that was shown outside of Glasgow, say, was shown internationally in places like art fairs and museums and was little-known—

still is the case actually—little-known in Scotland. There's a sense in which that kind of began to happen around the early 1990s, I guess. Yeah. Something like that.

MJ: At this time, how were you continuing to facilitate people learning about film and video, after the workshops had happened?

SA: It was up to individual students to kind of chase it up, you know, by borrowing equipment from the film and video place and it was basically teaching themselves and us critiquing it. There was no real expert in it or, or tutor in it. Although many visiting artists had input who did work in video and film. When Stephanie Smith started teaching a day a week on the MFA, she became a great input into the video work. I would say that John Calcutt, myself, Francis McKee were basically critiquing the work after the event of making it and were desperately interested in the outcome, used to go to exhibitions and were basically fellow artists in the sense that we would sit down and look at work and talk about it and discuss it, critique it, go to exhibitions of video work, try and stay as clued up as possible. But, we weren't able to facilitate the actual making of the work. We've got the electronic media area. Initially, it was Helge, an ex-MFA and John Shankie. Paul [Maguire] did it for a while in the girls' high, but when we were in the Barnes Building, it was mainly John and Helge, and then later on Harald Turek.

MJ: Do you remember the other arts schools in Scotland, did you feel like you had an awareness of what was going on there?

SA: We tried to make sure that we saw one or two of the other degree shows every year. I always thought Edinburgh was very conservative and stuffy. Although I believe they now have a good film course. Dundee was famous for its postgraduate that Peter McCaughey did in moving image. We knew much less about Aberdeen but there didn't seem to be much in the way of video work coming out of there. Yeah, I always felt that Glasgow was much more kind of up to speed with these things, partially to do with the tutors' ambitions for the students work and partially from the students' own impetus.

MJ: I know the Dundee course, the video and computer course, started in 1984—kind of around the same time—was there any sense of communication between you or did the students know what was going on?

SA: No, not at all and to this day I'm not sure why. The only person I know from that era who went to that course, I think it was a postgraduate course, was Peter McCaughey, who did the MFA and *then* went to Dundee. And what he went to Dundee for was access to equipment and technical help. He didn't go for the philosophy or the ideas element because he was full of ideas. He just wanted to get it made.

MJ: That's the impression I get. I've spoken to a few other people like Malcolm Dickson, and they did that course, after being a GSA, just to use the equipment. That seems to be important.

SA: I mean that was always the great stumbling block in the beginning: there were no cheap video cameras, there was no—everything was expensive. A bit like the early computers, so people were a bit stumped as to getting independent by owning their own equipment.

MJ: I want to go back to where you mentioned visiting lecturers, do you remember any of them, any names?

SA: We did employ a lot of the Glasgow artists who were years out of the MFA. Douglas Gordon worked one day a week before he became a mega star, Stephanie Smith, Richard Wright did some, Jacqui Donachie did some, Louise Hopkins, Claire Barclay. So, a lot of the Glasgow *Scotia Nostra* did some visiting teaching, but we also had teachers from elsewhere. I used to do an annual swap with Alastair MacLennan, the performance artist from Belfast, where I'd go and teach on his MFA for a week and he'd come and teach on my MFA for a week. No money changed hands, we just did the straight swap. That was good to get a new voice. We had Sonia Boyce. We had loads and loads of people actually—my brain's dead! What was the name of the woman who did the exploded shed?

MJ: Oh, Cornelia Parker?

SA: Yeah, she came and did a project with the MFAs—no, with the Environment Art lot. I mean, in Environmental Art we did all sorts of things that David Harding is the best person to talk to about because he's got a fantastic archive, despite the fact he lost the VHS tapes. I mean, we put on things like *Desire Caught by the Tail*, a play by Picasso with the characters were things like thin anxiety and fat anxiety. The curtains to be played by a minimum of six people, and things like that were videoed, you know, were filmed. So, there's a lot of stuff that went on that was off the beaten track, and certainly extracurricular. The very important thing in Environmental Art and the MFA were annual trips abroad. We tried to go every single year with one year group or another. I managed to get funding six years running from the DAAD, the German academic exchange programme for the MFA. We went everywhere in Germany and just saw how fantastic their contemporary art galleries and museums were, and how well funded they were.

MJ: Did you see, over your teaching career—do you think this experimental stuff got more compressed or pushed away?

SA: Well, it certainly got more professional, quote, unquote. In my view, it got a bit slick. And also, I think a lot of students saw video as a quick and easy way of making work, when in fact, it's as difficult to make a good video as it is a good painting or good sculpture or whatever. It used to drive the guys mad, who were teaching in electronic media, because somebody would come in on fourth year and say, I want to make a video, you know, as if it was—*poof!* There was just such a plethora of really dire, boring work. It's like, why should I be interested in what you had for breakfast kind of thing. I mean, I can remember video work to this day that really stood out and one of them was Erica Eyres. She applied to the MFA with these mad mad videos and we—Francis and John and I—were looking at the work. Usually we only look at a video for about five to ten minutes and we watched all of her videos all the way through and one of them was thirty-five minutes. She was the youngest person ever to get on to the MFA and I really love her video work. It's kind of mad. She's from this place called Winnipeg, in the middle of nowhere in Canada, and we've had three people from Winnipeg, and they've all been mad, you know, really crazy wonderful artists. And it was really such a small place because each person who came said we came because of Erica singing our praises.

MJ: I've only seen a couple videos by Erica but it's where she plays a character?

SA: Yes, she makes herself into a character but she also does fantastic drawings. She makes great sculpture. She's now in ceramics. She's making food items. I think she's making it just to make a few bob!

MJ: I bought a couple of her pears for my mum.

SA: I've got her bacon and eggs, but I've also got five of her drawings that I bought.

MJ: Yeah, they're very beautiful, super intricate. I guess I wonder, looking at the time you've been in Glasgow, if there are any key events in the art calendar that seemed really important? Anything really profound that sticks out?

SA: Even when they were students, Douglas and Euan Sutherland and Craig Richardson were doing performance work that was videoed and they were twice invited to take part in the National Review of Live Art, which originally started as performance work but also later included video work. They were showing in London when they were students, undergraduate students. They did quite a few pretty big-scale performances in Glasgow. So, the National Review of Live Art was a big thing in the calendar. Also, Mayfest. We didn't have Glasgow International then, you know, in those days. Oh, there was a film and video festival in Arnhem in Holland [AVE Festival] and quite a few people put work into that. I was asked to judge a prize given by Hiscox, the insurance people, in the Netherlands, I can't remember, it might have been the Rietveld Academy. It was a competition amongst hundreds of students for one-minute videos. I had to go and like decide on five and I had to watch about 100 videos. It messed with my head. So obviously, there were European places where video was an essential part of the curriculum.

MJ: In Glasgow in that time, in the 1990s, where would people go if they wanted to see this kind of work, was it being shown anywhere?

SA: I mean, there were video works shown at Tramway and CCA and places—or the Third Eye Centre, as it was known. But, I guess a lot of people went to London, to the ICA to see video work. There was a big exhibition of sound and video work at the Hayward Gallery that I remember a lot of people going to. Of course, this was all pre-online, being able to access everything, I can remember people buying DVDs of artists' work from the CCA and then of course, they went to each other's houses and looked at their own work. There was a kind of group of people who were involved in the music scene, which led to video works, it was a kind of circular thing. Dave Allen, John Shankie and a bunch of other guys used to play guitar, but film it. Then they'd start to make video work with their soundtrack. So, it wasn't just about somebody playing. You must know, Sarah Lowndes's book *Social Sculpture*?

MJ: Yeah, I do.

SA: A lot of info on the relationship between the music and art scenes, especially strong in Glasgow.

MJ: I guess I wonder, less about video specifically, but whether you thought there was a sort of quality of *Scottishness* about what people were making, or whether there was a collective identity, or things which made it different to art from other places?

SA: Again, I'd just come back to the experimental nature of the work, there was no house style. Nothing like Goldsmiths with its house style. People—certainly in the 1980s anyway, even into the 1990s—were very politicised. You must know, Ross's installations with the mountain at CCA. So, he has this love-hate relationship with Scotland, which gives it a very particular flavour I think. When he was a student, Roddy Buchanan printed a thirty-metre length of fabric with fake tartan, made it into a kilt. And when he wore it, and the kilt swings,

the pleats, there was a huge US missile in each pleat. He used to go into shops and change the labels on American ice cream soda bottles, which showed how many American bases and weapons there were in Scotland. I mean, people felt very strongly about these things. I'm not so sure students are quite as politicised now as they were then but maybe COVID and climate change has changed that?

MJ: Do you think the relationship people have to Scottishness or Scottish identity, has that disappeared more recently?

SA: It's less obvious now because as I said, you know, in the beginning, most of the students were from Glasgow or the west of Scotland and far fewer are now. But, a lot of our artists who are Glaswegian and are still making work in Glasgow, I think, still have this very strong connection to Scottish culture and that relates to everything from cinema, to books, to landscape to anything you care to mention. I think there was and perhaps still is a distinctive Scottish flavour, but it's maybe less obvious now than it used to be in the past. Although the rise of the SNP and the longing for Independence have bolstered all our hopes.

MJ: I wonder about resources and funding and how you have seen that ebb and flow over the years as well?

SA: Well, the advent of software that enables people to make their own videos, and the fact that most video artists have their own equipment now. You know, makes it tremendously easy compared to the past in terms of making work.

MJ: When did you see that start to change?

SA: I guess mid- to late 1990s. Hard for me to put dates on these things because everything's merged. The problem always came with showing the work. I can remember this guy from the Netherlands, Wim, who was on the MFA. We used to have Tramway for our MFA shows before they chucked us out. He wanted four video projectors, four high quality video projectors to make a kind of room within Tramway and muggins here had to source them. In one year, I was asked to get twenty-seven video projectors, which is beyond the pale. So, in the next year, I said people were responsible for finding their own equipment for showing their work. A lot of work was just shown on screen. Actually, a lot of students wanted to see it huge and they wanted good, high quality video projectors and that's where electronic media came in because they were able to put in a capital bid every year for better and better equipment. I think it's pretty good now.

MJ: It has become cheaper anyway.

SA: Yeah.

MJ: If video doesn't sell, how do you think people were make a living?

SA: Well, I guess Douglas Gordon did it by having limited edition videos. He would maybe have an edition of six or ten or whatever. Most people I think who became well known and were working in video were bought by national collections or museums rather than homes. In fact, a lot of work from Environmental Art or the MFA wouldn't work in a home. Not as easy as a painting by any means. I've travelled the world and I've seen work by our students in big collections, you know, in Mexico, in Australia, in America, in Europe. There's work in collections all over the world but the artists are so little known here. I mean if you ask the

man in the street to name a contemporary artist they'll probably say Tracey Emin or Damien Hirst, somebody who's a kind of celebrity, or Jack Vettriano which is even worse. I guess those artists who are really successful are successful on the international stage and have kind of absorbed the fact that they're not going to be well known at home.

MJ: What do you think we could do, or what Scotland could do, to change that to make its profile better?

SA: Well, I know that the National Review of Live Art is no longer but I think we could do with—I don't know what—I hate the word festival but a festival of moving image, you know, that was something that attracted Glasgow artists, Scottish artists, and perhaps international artists, which had a high profile and was respected, a bit like the festivals for feature films. It needs to have a bigger audience and it needs to have a wider audience and it needs to be shown in the way that the artist envisaged it, you know, rather than just, 'oh, we can't afford that,' or 'we'll have to put it on the screen.'

I worked on the Ulay/Abramovic show at Tramway where we had to have loads of video projectors and hanging box videos and they had these weird things that were like LPs, what were they called?

MJ: Laser discs?

SA: Laser discs, yeah. Which got lost in the post, lost in transit, arrived the day before the exhibition opening. That was a bit of a hairy thing. But Tramway was a brilliant place to show video once the shutters were closed. There're not many places actually that are ideally suited. I guess SWG3 is a decent place to show but we need something that's got a bit more impact and that explores it in depth, and as a standalone medium rather than a mixed bag with painting and sculpture, a kind of focus on it. There was a brilliant place in Berlin when we were last there, which was a video art library, where you could go and watch videos by every famous artist in the world. It was really great. It was free. It was funded by the city. You couldn't take them out. But you could watch them in there. Something like that would be good.

B. Malcolm Dickson

Marcus Jack: To start Malcolm, I'd like to develop a bit of professional biography for you. So, maybe if you could tell me what it was you studied?

Malcolm Dickson: I was in the department of drawing and painting at The Glasgow School of Art from 1980 to 1984. A long time ago. Left the Glasgow School of Art and was still making work as a practitioner. While I was in the painting department, while I was doing painting, I was also experimenting in other media. So, Super 8 film, installation-based works, multimedia was something that I was more drawn to than painting as a discipline, shall we say, as a particular practice. That was quite difficult in terms of the painting department because there weren't any staff there who had any knowledge whatsoever about anything outside of that particular discipline, that medium. There was nobody to assess the Super 8 work that I included as part of my degree show. It was all part of the process, it was early days I guess in terms of that practice.

I left, got involved in Transmission Gallery in 1985, when it was about to close—it had only been running for about a year, already the committee had run into problems with leaks in the basement and I think their morale was affected by that. There was a general meeting called and the committee then said something to the effect of 'look, we're going to fold unless other people come forward and run the show.' So, myself, Carol Rhodes, Gordon Muir and Graham Johnstone were the people who were involved at that point. I was involved in Transmission from 1985 to 1987. I was still practising myself at the time. Myself and others also relaunched Variant during that time, a separate initiative to Transmission, though intrinsic to it, to some extent—I'll come back to that in a minute. It was a fantastic opportunity, getting involved in Transmission, in terms of the freedom it gave you to be able to programme. At that time there was much less happening in Glasgow in terms of the arts infrastructure, so whatever you did got noticed more, I suppose you could say. There were only a few places, such as the Third Eye Centre, Collins Gallery, Transmission, Glasgow Print Studio, so Transmission was fairly pioneering I think in terms of breaking down certain barriers.

Previous exhibitions at Transmission, in that first nine-month phase of the committee was largely static-based artworks, of painting, sculpture and printmaking, with some great shows such as *Winning Hearts and Minds* [1984] and *Urban Life* [1983] with work by members of the gallery. The first exhibition of our tenure was called *Iconoclasm* [1985], with work an installation by myself and paintings by Gordon Muir and Peter Thomson – peers of mine from GSA Painting Department. I was very keen to expand the portfolio, shall we say. So, we started to introduce different types of artforms, such as film, video and performance, and all of that in retrospect happened quite quickly.

Everything was done collectively but there was always someone who was more in the driving seat for different project in a curatorial sense, but we didn't use the term 'curator' back then, you know, you 'coordinated' things, that's the way we looked at it. One of the early shows I initiated in 1985 and worked with Simon Brown on was *War of Images* which took place between in January 1986 and was split between Transmission and the Glasgow School of Art. That was a mixed exhibition of issue-based work, from Scotland and the UK as well. It included people like Docklands [Community Poster] Project, Mick Duffield (Crass Films), Billy Clark (who went on to play an active part in the third committee), Peter Seddon, Peter Thomson, Helen Flockhart, Gordon Muir, Tony Rickaby—there were screenings, talks, all sorts of things going on. So, it was quite exciting. I was always quite keen to be reaching out

and not having things be contained to our own gallery wall as well, that extended to the conceptual or theoretical level. There were those things to juggle about being a practitioner and then the other aspects of being a cultural worker such as organising things, making things happen but also writing. And that was really about controlling your own methods of artistic discourse, when it's that DIY ethos—somebody's not doing it for you, you just do it yourself—and that worked quite effectively. So, Transmission made some good in-roads and collaborations with the other institutions within the city at the time.

We brought Stuart Brisley up from London in 1986 to do a performance, it was a two-day durational performance at Transmission and it was a fantastic experience and that coincided with his major exhibition *The Georgianna Collection* at the Third Eye Centre at the time. When Transmission was happening, organisations outside of Scotland who did take an interest were *Performance* magazine and Projects UK in Newcastle, in fact it was Projects UK who introduced me to Stuart Brisley and I went down to Newcastle to see one of his artworks there and met him. He was quite taken by the collective structure of Transmission. I guess he got the impression that there were these young, working-class intelligentsia folks doing this thing that he wanted to be involved in, so that was quite productive. I guess that performance side of it was what led into the series of events that we called Event Space.

And quickly following on from the Stuart Brisley one—at this time Doug Aubrey, one half of the video art duo Pictorial Heroes, was involved in the committee—and we got to be organising the first EventSpace video installation show that you talk about in your article in *MAP* magazine. As has been written, it was the first major exhibition of video art in Scotland since the one ten years previous, *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* at the Third Eye Centre [1976]. Looking back on it now, that's not a large space of time but back then it felt as though nothing has happened between 1976 and 1986, although there had been bits and bobs happening in various other venues, we were fired up by what was happening within video art in the UK and I guess also at a European level as well. We were aware of a lot that was happening and a main portal of that, of course, was *Performance* magazine—all pre-digital era this, so no Internet whatsoever. Magazines and snail mail put you in contact with people, in equally effective ways as it's actually done now.

So, *EventSpace 1* was quite a large exhibition. There was a video wall within that that was sponsored by DER Video Rentals, there were various video installations that were made with the purpose of showing on this video wall: Pictorial Heroes, Steve Littman, Steve Partridge. There were performances from Kevin Atherton, Zoe Redman installation. The opening event had Tom McGrath performing some of his spoken word pieces—a very celebratory affair. There does not seem to be any documentation of that, though there is of other aspects of the show.

MJ: Could you tell me a bit more about the research and the networks that allowed that to happen. I know you've spoken a bit about *Performance* magazine, but how you managed to find these artists? There seems to be a pronounced Dundee connection there, or maybe that came later.

MD: There was a strong Dundee connection because the department of Electronic Imaging had fairly recently been established by Steve Partridge at Dundee. Doug Aubrey and Alan Robertson as Pictorial Heroes were two of the first students, in that first year in actual fact, which must have been round about that period of 1986 into 1987. So, Steve Partridge was quite involved with his contacts, so it was him that got Tom McGrath involved and Kevin Atherton. It was a combination of Dundee—Steve Partridge, Doug Aubrey—and then I guess

myself, from what I was aware of that was happening at a UK level, that assembled the content for that one.

Just as a side note to that, in terms of what I was doing myself, I had been a recipient in 1986 of a Visual Arts Video Bursary that the Scottish Arts Council had just initiated the year before, Pictorial Heroes were also recipients. So, I spent nine months in Dundee making work and from that, some which was exhibited at the Smith Biennial at the time which was a big major showcase of contemporary artwork from Scotland. I also exhibited at AVE, Audio-Visual Experimental festival in Arnhem in Holland, and at the Third Eye Centre as well with the work that I produced, *Arrival/Departure* [1987]. Scouts from AVE had come to Glasgow in 1986, it was a fantastic festival, AVE, a real buzz. They sent scouts out right throughout Europe to make contact with nodes of activity in various cities in order for them to do their research for content that would contribute to the AVE festival. That provided some more opportunities there, because in 1987 I was invited to exhibit there, as were Craig Richardson and Douglas Gordon who were working as a performance art duo called Puberty Institution. It was through Transmission that quite a lot of the works that were selected from Scotland were shown in AVE and further extended the possibilities, and certainly gave us some kind of encouragement about what we were doing. We weren't producing work in isolation, it certainly wasn't a parochial practice. We were looking at what was happening elsewhere and very keen to foster links at that European level.

MJ: I wonder about the reception you were getting for this work, looking at EventSpace, do you remember how audiences reacted or how the arts community reacted to it?

MD: Seemed to be very well received as far as I recall. The response from the press was a curious one because video art as a term was not really in currency within visual arts circles. I remember one piece that was written in one of the main newspapers at the time asking something along the lines of 'is it art? Is it TV? Is it film? What is it?' That was what we were exploring, pushing, that which was in the gaps between more mainstream practices. That was a kind of productive response, certainly in terms of what we were doing, in terms of being able to engage with those types of questions.

MJ: Were you interested in those categories or did it not feel like it mattered?

MD: Well, the category that we identified with was experimental film and creative video, which was a term that we used to distinguish more artistic approaches to using the moving image, that set it apart from a more narrative style of filmmaking and a more documentary mode of video practice at the time.

MJ: If *EventSpace 1* is in 1986, and you leave Transmission in 1987, at what point does that become an autonomous project?

MD: EventSpace was fairly organic in the way that it took root within Transmission itself. It was myself and Doug Aubrey within Transmission who started to programme events roundabout the title of EventSpace and at that point Ken Gill got involved and Ken was one of the founder members of Projects UK, had moved up to Glasgow around about that time, he was also the coordinator of Glasgow Film and Video Workshop. So, there was the three of us and we thought, 'look, this is a really interesting project, why don't we model ourselves to some extent upon Projects UK,' being a non-office-based arts organisation that looks to support, commission, and stage art events within and outwith established gallery spaces. Site-

specificity was very much a feature there, about making works happen in public but on a project to project basis. There wasn't any ongoing funding for EventSpace at the time so we applied for little bits of money as and when.

It came out of *EventSpace 1* in 1986, *EventSpace 2* was fairly shortly after. Just to backtrack on what've said about Stuart Brisley. *EventSpace 1* happened first, then there was *EventSpace 2* and the Stuart Brisley performance was part of *EventSpace 2*. I'm just looking at a note here and correcting myself. *EventSpace 2* had Charlie Hooker, quite a large performance piece that he did at Transmission at the time and that performance involved a lot of additional helpers within it, so students from the environmental art department and some from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art got involved in that. That was a nice bringing together of those two centres of education where a lot of innovation was coming out of: in Dundee and in the Environmental Art Department at the Glasgow School of Art. That was a kind of three-headed thing that was happening, there was a feeling that changes that were happening and it was coming from those three places: Transmission, Environmental Art and from Dundee itself.

EventSpace 3 happened again and then in 1987, EventSpace, as a separate organisation—we were an association at that point—we presented a big project called *The Cenotaph Project* [1988] by Stuart Brisley, Iain Robertson and Maya Balcioglu. We got some funding from the Scottish Arts Council and Glasgow City Council's Festivals Unit at that time. So, a few years before 1990 there was already some pots of funding available for art activity in the run up to Glasgow becoming European Capital of Culture. That project, which was sculptural in its nature, took place in the Pearce Institute in Govan in the southside of the city. After that, there were a few events we organised: a Canadian media artist Paul Wong, we got him up from England to do a presentation at Transmission as Projects UK had brought him over to do a series of talks in various places and to participate in—I think—Edge festival. Again, in July 1988, representatives of AVE came over and it was EventSpace they liaised with there in terms of putting together a package that then was shown at AVE festival itself.

Moving on, in 1989, in the run up to Glasgow 1990, I had initiated a project called *Sites/Positions* and that was a series of site-specific installation works and events that took place in Glasgow in the very early part of 1990 in peripheral areas of the city. It was the first site-specific series of artworks that did happen at the start of European Capital of Culture. So, the thoughts on that: sites, positions, a site as a place where a building or a town stood, position is a looking at the way that parts are placed or arranged but it's also a mental attitude or a way of looking at a question. It was multi-categorical but much of the work within it dealt with social and political themes relating to the city. I couldn't find the actual brochure for that but within that Christine Borland did an installation that was situated at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, and that was compressed rubbish from Summerston dump in the north east of the city, it was then presented in Kelvingrove Art Gallery and objects from Kelvingrove Art Gallery were cast and placed within this open-cast dump in Summerston. So, it was linking the periphery to the centre within that.

Douglas Gordon made a piece on the façade of what remained of Glasgow Green railway station, that was called *Mute* [1990] and was a series of dates relating to Glasgow's hidden and radical past, like events and uprisings and such, a very poignant piece. Unfortunately, that work which should have been kept for posterity was knocked down several years ago. Other people involved in that: Gillian Steel did a project with a group of girls in the estate of Sighthill; Euan Sutherland did an installation in an abandoned school also in the north of the city which was drawing attention to the encroaching privatisation at the time; Alison

Marchant's work *Household* [1990] was installed in an empty tenement flat in Govan and recalled the role of women in the Rent Strikes of 1915 and 1920-27, and which involved collaboration with local women, and as well as an installation there was certainly an element of oral history in this. It was a very interesting event. As part of it, we organised a day tour, we hired a double-decker bus and we advertised this in the national press, and we got quite a few people coming up from London for that, took them round on a bus to various sites: the critic Iwona Blazwick, who went on to be the curator at ICA and now Director of Whitechapel Art Gallery, *Herald* critic Clare Henry, and editor of *Performance* magazine, Rob La Frenais who was planning 1990's Edge Biennale.

Sites/Positions happened in the early part of 1990 and then we were writing a development document that would then take us forward, that would combine site-specific artworks with other types of public displays. Another project we put on at that time was the Metro Billboard Project, that was something that was initiated by Projects UK—a series of billboards across various billboard sites in the city. I think events around video were bubbling more to the surface in terms of what we were doing, and we started to organise a series of video events and screenings. I know one of them, that I do have a note of, took place at the Goethe-Institut in January of 1991. So, the link between Transmission and EventSpace became reversed: EventSpace was the organisation and the series of video and film screenings we were doing were called *TX* which is an abbreviation of transmission. In that one at the Goethe-Institut we presented nine videos and films from eight different countries—experimental pieces exploring their mediums and some documentary work as well. That work I had selected from the various events that I had attended at the AVE festival itself. That was quite an interesting one.

We were then developing the notion of a film and video festival which became New Visions. I don't know if there was anything that you wanted to ask me in between that before we move on?

MJ: Yeah, if we could just reflect on a couple of things. I'm wondering about communities around these projects. You've spoken about some of the people involved. I've heard elsewhere people describing a media art ghetto and a separation of video from other conceptual art forms, but from what you've spoken about it seems quite integrated with people like Christine and Douglas. I wonder, did you feel a sense of separation based on media?

MD: I didn't myself, no. The breaking down of medium specificity is what interested me whilst at the same time, the particularities of certain practices, particularly of video art—my colleagues such as Doug was much more locked into Video Art as a practice and video art as something that has come out of the milieu of London Video Arts. At that time, no there wasn't too much of a differentiation in terms of the way that we were presenting things or describing them.

As time unfolded, they became slightly apart as things began to change within Glasgow and Scotland with the attention that was put on particular artists' practice, let's call it the new conceptual school around Douglas and Christine and various other artists working at the time. I don't think I'm wrong in saying that *Sites/Positions* was something of a springboard for them at the time. They had just left art school, so it was early days in terms of them developing their voices and their practice. They were really an exciting bunch of young artists, a few years younger than myself at the time. So, there was a real kind of rigour as to

what was happening around the scene. Quite a bit of that is chronicled to some extent in earlier writings.

I guess at that point I tried to capture a lot of that activity and the events—through artist-initiated activities in the 1980s to what became the 1990s, I’ve tried to chronicle that to some extent in the chapter that I wrote in the book *This will not happen without you: from the collective archive of the Basement Group, Projects UK and Locus+* [2007]. There is some detail in the article, it’s not something I’ve revisited for some time but I was trying to bring out and describe the actual activities and the links that were happening between Glasgow, through Transmission I guess, with other initiatives that were happening in other places, particularly in Northern Ireland through Catalyst Arts and in Newcastle as well. It was about regional initiatives, that’s what I talk about a lot in that article, and the connections that were made between artists in Glasgow going to Belfast—for example, Roddy Buchanan is one of the artists who springs to mind that went to do the postgrad or MA as it was at Belfast School of Art. They were drawn there because Alistair MacLennan was the head of the fine art department and Alistair was quite influential, both in his writing and his stance, and in his performance work that we had seen in Glasgow during the National Review of Live Art in the latter half of the 1980s. That was a direct influence upon the Puberty Institution that Douglas and Craig were doing, and also the work of Euan Sutherland, so that’s just another little footnote there—that article does contain quite a bit of that.

MJ: I wonder, and this is something that we’re almost getting at here—you mentioned regional activity—and I wonder with respect to London and what was going on there, was there a sense of tension and a sense of not wanting to go through that centre?

MD: Yeah. Well, even from now and going back, a backward trajectory, that’s always been a concern, that so much goes through the funnel of a London-centric interpretation of how the arts are. *Sites/Positions*, for example, preceded *Windfall*, and *Windfall* preceded that big event that Damian Hirst was involved in in London. And the way that history is written is that London initiated that breaking out of the arts into the warehouse spaces when in actual fact it was already happening in Glasgow. My thing throughout history here is that there’s always been parallel developments happening in various places and we do have to shout a bit louder to get heard, to get people’s heads turning, and that’s usually because the concentration of the artistic infrastructure has been concentrated in London, in the past. So, I think that that’s still something of a concern, I still get it now, you get people saying, ‘you didn’t see our show,’ and I’m saying, ‘well, you’ve never come up to Glasgow.’ They’ll say, ‘Glasgow’s too far away,’ and ‘well, did you know that Glasgow’s the same distance from London as what London is from Glasgow.’ It’s the same kind of differential. That’s quite funny. Even people living on the peripheries of London say the same, it’s just the way things are. You have to keep chipping away at that to make sure that what is happening, let’s call it, on the periphery of that discourse does get heard, does get seen, and does get written about. Because that is what will reappear in history when young curators and researchers like yourself are investigating it, they’ll go to the materials that already exist, so if it’s not written about it will evaporate.

Just as a side note, I was going through this myself, in terms of plugging a gap, in the archive of Street Level going back to something that did happen in 1997, for example. It was called *On the Buses* and it was a collaboration between—it was initiated by Catalyst Arts in Belfast and Street Level involved in it, and the Globe Gallery in North Shields, where it was at the time. A double-decker bus came from Belfast with artists on it, parked outside Street Level, artists from Glasgow got involved and then it went to the Globe. And there’s nothing existing

in our records that I could find, I couldn't even remember who the artists were. So, I got in touch with one of the artists, saying, 'do you remember *On the Buses*?' She says 'funnily enough, I think I've got a brochure for that.' So, she went and looked in her garage and did indeed find a flyer for that. It just gave those details and it's because she kept that flyer that that knowledge gap is now plugged. Anyway, I'm slightly digressing but I'd say that's why it's important that the materials, the printed matter, should never be thrown away because that is what forms part of the narrative of the history. But there's not anywhere where you could get those materials. It's not lodged in any one place and I guess that'll always be a continuing concern because as time goes on new histories are being made and written.

MJ: Yeah, it's useful to think about that. Especially now, I guess the production of catalogues is maybe even less than it was before. It was interesting that you talked about creating an infrastructure and writing, and it makes me want to ask about *Variant* as maybe the solution to that in creating a bit of a critical ecology in Glasgow, for Glasgow. I'm aware that timeline probably runs alongside some of what we've talked about, so just before moving on to *New Visions*, I wonder if you could tell me a bit about your involvement in that?

MD: The very first issue of *Variant* came out in 1984 while I was in the latter stages of being a student. It came out of, let's say, the disaffection that students in the painting department had about the level of teaching and the critical rigour, or the lack of it, that existed in the art school at the time. We thought we've just got to rattle the cages here and do it ourselves. With a little bit of money from the Student Association at the time, we published one issue of that. There's a prehistory to that as well of course because that came out of a fanzine that I was doing while I was a student called *Stigma*. Ken Currie was involved in that at the time and designed the cover based upon one of his Russian constructivist drawings and he contributed various polemical articles to that. There was a lot of political discussion in it. At that time at The Glasgow School of Art there were numerous left-leaning societies and organisations of every persuasion, different socialist groups and then there was like three of us in the anarchist group, for example. It was a lively scene with discussions happening and the portal for that was *Stigma*, and that became a platform for people to vent their spleens I suppose. I spent quite a bit of time as a student, when I wasn't in the studio, or in the annex of The Griffin down the road—which is very much a part of the art school as the Mackintosh building—in the basement of the student representative council. There was a Gestetner machine, an old-style thing that you had to start up by hand and then it was electric, very messy affair. That was a kind of fanzine that we did and that did lead into *Variant* in 1984.

Then I left and several months later when I was involved in *Transmission*, we did another issue of *Variant* in 1985. I don't imagine you need any more information on that, but around about that same kind of time *Alba* magazine had started and that was a more mainstream magazine, and a very good one. So, you had *Variant* and then you had *Alba*. You had the centre and then you had the periphery, if you like, and then both of them feed off one another.

In 1987 then, relaunched *Variant*, it was funded through a few adverts that we got some organisations to contribute and a couple of donations from individuals of £50 each: Sam Ainsley from the Environmental Art Department at GSA and Keith Hartley at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh, they were the two contributors to that. The rest of the costs had to be covered through a few advertisements. There was definitely a hunger for seeing *Variant* appear again. There was a gap in criticism and what was being written about, and that's what led to it establishing itself in 1987 and 1988. There was a group of people who were quite involved at the time, who supported it and fed in ideas, and it crossed

over into interests in the Free University of Glasgow. It then ran, with fairly acceptable production values at the time, still using Letraset to make it work, and strips typeset text stuck down with Pritt Stick. There were no design packages available to do these things, the design didn't matter so much as the content but obviously design became much more integrated into the content and what the ethos of it was.

By 1990, through various discussions with the Scottish Arts Council at the time, they finally gave a grant for the development of *Variant*, through which a stipulation of that was that we employed a consultant to help in a development plan to establish *Variant* as a regular magazine. So, Nick Spice from London Review of Books spent a couple of days working on that and we came up with a plan as to how it would work financially how it would work through subscriptions, by getting so many and the renewals through that, how it could be a feasible financial proposition. That was accepted and the first issue which had a spine to it was in 1990. That issue contained a lot of reviews and discussions round about the various artistic things that were happening around Glasgow 1990. There was an interview with David Harding in it, it was still relatively early days for the Environmental Art Department at The Glasgow School of Art where David was the head of. That interview was a very interesting one because it straddled the past to the present, in terms of where was coming from, in terms of his community art practice, into the transplantation of the APG ethos of context is half the work. That's one of the contributions that I do recall, the other is an article by Jo Spence, in actual fact that we had commissioned and that was prior to her book *Cultural Sniping* [1995] coming out.

There were a lot of things happening around about that time in the do-it-yourself publishing front, across different art forms. There was *Variant* within the art sphere, there was *Edinburgh Review* that was covering literature as well as non-fiction. There was *West Coast* magazine which was another literature magazine. *Here and Now* magazine which was kind of post-situationist journal that emanated from Glasgow and there was a group of that in Leeds also. *Open World Poetics* was another magazine that was being produced and that was around about the broad themes of geo-poetics.

A lot of those initiatives that were manifesting themselves as magazines kind of coagulated around The Free University of Glasgow in the late 1980s and into 1990. The link to Jo Spence in *Variant* 1990 came out of us inviting Jo to Glasgow to give a talk at Transmission on art and class, for example. One of the events in the later 80s was called *Scratch Parliament*, which was discussing issues round about independence and devolution, and in January of 1990 at The Pearce Institute in Govan, a very significant conference called *Self-Determination and Power* and the two keynote speakers for that were Noam Chomsky who came over from the States and the Scottish philosopher George Davie. That was a showcase that brought together all sorts of people within different milieu from teachers, social workers, artists, activists, writers, all sorts of things. Myself and a few others documented that on video in actual fact. Jim Kelman was one of the main organisers of that event, he was quite key to The Free University itself. I've still got thirteen hours of material from that conference in 1990. We shot on broadcast quality tape at the time, Beta, not Betamax, Betacam, and that was bought through money donated by Jim, through him winning one of the literature prizes. That's maybe not something to repeat however. Anyway, does that make any sense, there were a lot of things happening.

MJ: There was a Daniel Reeves installation at The Pearce Institute in 1990, was that any relation?

MD: Not to The Free University, to EventSpace to some degree. There was this little pamphlet that we did that brought together some things that happened in 1990 and that included *Urban Strategies*, *Sites/Positions*, *Trans-Europe Express*, *Scottish-Hungarian Artists' Exchange*—Ken Gill was involved in that—video installation *The Well of Patience*, and again it was Ken Gill who was involved in that one, *TX* video screenings and contributory text by *Variant* magazine. So that was attempting to put in one brochure the disparate amounts of activity that was happening at the time. But, Daniel Reeves' *The Well of Patience* was done under the auspices of another organisation that Ken was doing at the time. But as he was involved in Event Space, these things all kind of connected by the individuals who were undertaking the various initiatives at the time. Pan-European Arts was the organisation that Ken was doing, who did *The Well of Patience*, and he also initiated the Scottish-Hungarian Artists' Exchange.

MJ: Slightly related to that: how did *Variant Video* emerge and what was the plan around that?

MD: Yeah, *Variant Video*, so following me having the Visual Artists' Video Bursary, and making work in Dundee, I applied to do a postgraduate there, which I did in 1988 and 1989. So, there were a number of things that I did in that fairly intense nine months of the postgraduate year, it was a very competitive course which covered a multitude of things. As well as trying to make my own artistic practice, it was productions that I was involved in making because the aspect of documentation and putting things on record really inspired me. I did a pilot *Variant Video* in 1988 that was just a limited kind of edition and there were various things on that from AVE festival, George Wylie interview, things like that, but that led to making the *Variant* videos while I was a student there and while I was doing the magazine at the same time.

The two issues of *Variant Video* were released at the same time to coincide with issue eight of *Variant* magazine itself. So, of the two issues, one was called *Workers City* and the other was called *Video Art: The Midnight of the Decade*. *The Midnight of the Decade* section included short works from students at Duncan of Jordanstone alongside a series of interviews that we conducted at Video Positive festival in Liverpool. That was the first big video art festival that happened in the UK that we went to and we documented a lot of it. Projects UK partly funded the duplication of the tapes for *Variant Video* that allowed us to do, I can't remember how many copies we did, maybe 500 VHS copies that we distributed through various means—that was on VHS at the time. It got various screenings at the time as well in different platforms, I presented it at various festivals I do recall and *Workers City* was also presented in other types of set-ups that were more converse with what *Workers City* was about. That was interviews with more writers and activists: Hamish Henderson, James Young, John Taylor Caldwell and Farquhar McLay. That's quite an important document now. The issue of documentation and recording voices was one aspect to that and the other was the burgeoning area of new art practice, these were the twin pillars of *Variant Video*. Also, the dual concerns of myself as a practitioner at the time.

MJ: It does seem that marriage of the two to be a really strong strand, and maybe part of the reason why the two were never ghettoised, or there seems to be a lot of crossover in people's practice at the time. I wonder at what point did you stop making work as part of your own practice?

MD: Signature artworks, shall we say, maybe around about 1991. I participated in Transmission exchange with an artists' centre in Bergen, Norway, which Christine Borland

had organised. So, I presented a video installation as part of that. Ross Sinclair, Martin Boyce, Claire Barclay and Nathan Coley were the other artists who were involved in that. That was really interesting to do that within the context of those artists' work. I guess they are slightly younger than me but Christine was interested in the work I was doing, she then subsequently asked me to do a solo show at Transmission that I must have declined because it never did happen.

By that time doing *Variant* and maybe trying to do my own particular art practice, which was beginning to be shoved underground, shall we say, so, doing New Visions, doing the magazine, at the time, what I was doing myself took a backseat. I was still interested in the documentary, and documentation of work, if you can call that part of your cultural practice. We went to the *Next 5 Minutes* conference and event in Amsterdam, myself, Doug and Stephen Hurrell, and documented that. That was all round about the theme of tactical television and guerrilla media. *Variant Video* was shown at that—in fact when we arrived at The Paradiso where the event was taking place, we entered the main hall and what was being projected in a huge scale at the time was *Variant Video* – that was something of an inspiring moment! We did a whole load of interviews with various artists and activists at that time, and I still have all the Hi-8 video from that. It was planned that that would be our second—the idea was to continue with *Variant Video* but that fell by the wayside because concentration had to be put on the printed magazine and the multi-headed New Visions that was happening at the time.

MJ: Great, it's probably a good time to start talking about that. Could you tell me about its roots and how the first one came together?

MD: Yeah, New Visions, well that came out of EventSpace. It took place under the auspices of EventSpace but then New Visions became its own thing and superseded the previous. I can't remember exactly the details running up to New Visions but we developed a plan to undertake a multi-venue event that would showcase what was happening in contemporary experimental film and video art at that time. So, the Scottish Arts Council and Glasgow City Council, and then a little bit of money from the Scottish Film Council, were what funded that first festival which took place in 1992. So, the venues for that were Glasgow Film Theatre, The Glasgow School of Art, Goethe-Institut, Transmission Gallery and the Apollo Bar which is now Stereo. 1–9 April was the first New Visions.

Through Louise Crawford's contacts in Budapest, we invited over a Hungarian experimental filmmaker Gábor Császari who brought a slit camera and self-built projector which were used in a film installation called *L.S.D.*, which was on at Transmission—an incredible event. He did a workshop at Shawfield race track also, there were a few artists participating in that. At the GFT there were a whole number of different packages that we had put together or curated round about particular themes. *International Zeitgeist* were mixed programmes that were selected from an international open call. Obviously by that point we had contacts in various countries and various places, a precursor to that had been the screenings that we had been doing in later 1990 and 1991. So, the mixed programmes, there was *Zeitgeist*; there was a programme on animation, London Video Arts were involved in that; we did a particular programme round about the punk theme; there was a programme of film from London Video Arts; from Viper in Switzerland; new video art from Australia; new video art from Germany; from Slovenia; from Norway, Scandinavia and Denmark; there was a David Hall retrospective as part of that as well.

Another strand to that was called *Electronic Destinies*, that was looking ahead to the future world of electronic media and virtual reality. Within this as well, the political documentary strand was a thematic called *Communities of Resistance*. There was a package put together that included works from people like Despite TV who had made the film *Battle of Trafalgar* [1990] on the Poll Tax protests in London, Dara Birnbaum from the States, and various other things. In parallel to the festival itself, issue eleven of *Variant* came out: there was a piece on David Hall, an interview with Despite TV, articles by Jez Welsh, Kathleen Rodgers, Sean Cubitt, and a piece by Marina Gržinić who was one of the artists who came over from Slovenia. We didn't go hell bent for leather to promote New Visions in *Variant* at the time. I was always quite sensitive to overpromoting in *Variant* what we were doing in New Visions.

Just going back to your question about when did I stop making my own work, one of the reasons why we started EventSpace as practitioners was because our own work was not getting shown but in creating these platforms for others, I felt that it wasn't ethically right to be promoting your own work through these things that were public events. With the benefit of hindsight, we should have said, 'let's not be embarrassed or wrestle with those ethical issues, let's include our own work in it,' because after all we're doing this as artist-curators. But there you go, there was always this kind of distinction in an attempt to keep critical distance for the sake of a certain impartiality, if that makes any sense to you at all.

MJ: Yeah, and it would be around that time as well that Transmission made it part of their constitution that they wouldn't show committee members' work. Maybe it was a whole thing. Could you tell me a bit about the behind-the-scenes there, who was involved and how that changed over the editions as well?

MD: New Visions was initiated and organised by myself and Doug Aubrey. Paula Larkin, who worked with me on generating advertisements for *Variant*, and Ann Vance became involved in 1993 and 1994. [...] The first Festival was 1992 and it was mainly the two of us who were doing it. By the time of the festival in 1994 Doug had left and Ann and Paula were both involved with me on that, as well as others in their various capacities, such as Robert H King who did a lot of the live sound work performances of it. It wasn't until 1996 that Ann and Paula actually put together the 1996 New Visions.

There were events that happened in 1993 also. There was an overlap between *Variant* and New Visions and we shared an office in Robertson Street. The last issue of *Variant*, when I was the editor of it, does have an advert in it for the New Visions festival, that was spring of 1994 and the call out for it, which went through—'deadline for submissions, the 1st February 1994'—it was. Accepting all formats really VHS, Hi-8, Super 8, 16mm, 35mm, but also computer-based artworks as well.

MJ: Did you have a submissions panel that was going through all this?

MD: There was a submissions panel, yeah. And that submission panel—I do have a note of it somewhere—it'd be myself, there was Doug, there was a few external people that we brought in to be involved in that as well such as Louise Crawford and Pauline Law, both had been or were still involved in Glasgow Film and Video Workshop at the time.

MJ: So, you were involved throughout New Visions or did you step back at some point as well?

MD: I stepped back in late 1995 when I started working at Street Level, i.e. I stepped back from being in the driving seat shall we say but I was still quite involved.

Just on a final footnote on New Visions [1994], I'd just like to mention the different thematics to that, or the different themes we were dealing with. There was *Camcorder Culture* and *Street Technologies*, there was *Animation and Multimedia*, *Tactical Television* and the *Trans-Local*, there was the *International Zeitgeist*, which was the mixed programme selected from international callout. There was a strand called *Reimagining Scotland*. There was the *Virtual Living Rooms* which was installations by Glasgow-based artists which recreated the Scottish living room and that was in the top floor of the Third Eye Centre or CCA as it was known by that point. Another programme theme was found footage and home movies. So, the call was for work across all of those different strands. There were quite a number of installations that we also presented as part of that, so Ewan Morrison did an installation called *Closet* [1994] which was in the CCA, Peter McCaughey did a public-based work called *Borrowed Light* [1994], here was projection-based work by Louise Crawford, Ben Skea and Peter McCaughey. A number of talks took place at the CCA, including David Garcia on the Amsterdam Translocal Network. A collective called Digital Deviance came up from London as well and gave a presentation as part of that, and that was various kinds of digital media activists like Matthew Fuller and other movers and shakers.

An interesting feature of that was Van Gogh TV who had recently presented work at the Venice Biennale. So, we invited them to come over to do a presentation in the CCA which was intended to be a live link-up between Glasgow and Italy—though again, remember this is prior to broadband and the internet as we know it now—so this was like a very nervous moment that sold out, it was free but it was fully booked at the CCA. Everybody gathered and just about an hour before it started Salvatore Vanasco, who came over from Germany on behalf of Van Gogh TV, checked his connection and discovered that the connection to his computer was different to the British one. Nothing like paying attention to the detail! So, a couple of people shot out across Glasgow trying to find specialist suppliers of a particular gadget to make this happen. It kind of flew by the seat of its pants, very interesting experiment nevertheless. I remember when some of these guys from Digital Deviance were up saying, 'where can I get Internet access?' It was dial-up Internet access at the time and there was only one café in Glasgow where you could do that. It's interesting when you think about it within that framework and also in the context of how formative that time was and how pioneering some of the work that was being made was. It was incredible.

MJ: To me, even being able to put that together without the luxury of the Internet and email is an extraordinary feat in itself. I wonder if you could reflect or remember anything about receptions and the audience? Who was coming, was it local or was it international?

MD: Yeah, it was mixed. Obviously, the larger attendance for anything that happens in a particular place will be the local but there was quite an international collection of people who were invited to be a part of that and there were also the partnerships we already had in existence like the Goethe-Institut, Danish Institute in Edinburgh and various other places that spread the word even further. A lot of people did travel to come to this, so it wasn't purely localised and it wasn't necessarily only speaking to a local audience—elements of the programme were considered to be accessible to local audiences and others appealing to visitors from afar. That reach was part of what we were trying to do.

MJ: Referring to 1996 and the funding issues that arise, was there a sense that the Scottish Arts Council were with you in this or was that a fight?

MD: Yeah, I experienced it first-hand. A lot of it is lost to history now but it was a constant struggle. Obviously Scottish Arts Council, now Creative Scotland, there is personnel within that body who are very much in the know and supporters of what we were doing, but there was always a tendency of over-reporting to the Scottish Arts Council at the time. They were probably the main funder of it and I think, yeah, it's absolutely perfectly fine that you have to justify what the public use of the funds that you receive is, but there was always this friction over the notion of quality because it depended upon the officers at the time who couldn't quite get their head around the more experimental edge of this practice and that caused problems because we didn't have a scientific means through which we could say this is quality because here is the evidence. We're telling you it's quality and you should come and see it and evidence it first-hand.

So, there was a lot of lobbying that went on, constant, various reports written and I've got lots of things relating to that, so I can only really touch the surface without doing a disservice to some of the detail within that. We did get support in 1994 for New Visions, we then wanted to take that to an even higher level but as soon as that festival was over and reporting had been done there were indications coming, just to put it generally, that the Scottish Arts Council didn't want to be supporting two festivals of that nature in Scotland: us in Glasgow and the Edinburgh Fringe Film and Video Festival that had been going for longer and who we had a good connection with. As you know and you have noted in your article, there was something of a forced marriage that took place over the course of time that just led to the erosion of the morale and the more cooperative spirit that was at work within the organisation of New Visions itself. That led to schisms and people falling out, that was all very unfortunate as we moved towards, shall we say, trying to take that area of practice to a higher and more professional level. I use the word professional in the sense of being more recognised within the canon of visual arts practice, as a better funded and recognised organisation.

Another little footnote Marcus, I'll come back to this in a second, was that *Variant* partnered with Video Positive in their festival of 1993 in producing this issue of *Variant* that also functioned as their catalogue.

After New Visions, however, there was a flurry and a fairly consistent series of events and programmes that we did. If you look into from January to March of 1995, for example, there were four programmes of work that we put together.

MJ: Who is the 'we' at this point, is this as New Visions?

MD: That is New Visions yes, and I'm still involved in it at the time, and Paula and Ann are involved also. Marth McCulloch from Street Level was one of the selectors in this too, Alice Angus from the Glasgow School of Art. So, four packages of work called *International Zeitgeist* that mixed Scottish produced work alongside the international. There were various venues we showed them in: Street Level was a conduit through which we presented work, The Glasgow School of Art, Goethe Institute, and others. There's a brochure for that that I can also scan for you. I've got duplicates of some of these.

By the middle of 1995, we started producing something called *Infosource*. That was a newsletter sharing information on what was happening in the area of artistic moving image. This is the second newsletter that was produced by the looks of it.

MJ: With Smith/Stewart on the cover?

MD: That's right, yeah. So, that aimed to create a focus for the areas of creative video, experimental film and new media practices in Scotland. I'm reading this out obviously. It's meant to complement, publicise to a wider audience the activities of New Visions and events by other organisations in these areas. It wasn't always about me, me, me, we liked to publicise what other people were doing. That was all about promoting a more altruistic way of working, to put it a bit pompously, and to stimulate a more critical and active environment around the medium. There were opportunities that we included in that, the various programmes that we were doing, we presented three film and video packages from the Zone festival which happened in Maidstone—and those three packages I, in fact, curated for Zone in Maidstone as an individual curator but New Visions was a partner in that.

We also developed a series of packages that toured alongside the Fotofeis festival. Fotofeis was the Scottish international festival of photography, I think the first one was in 1993, so by 1995 we had developed a series of programmes to compliment that. [...] We did a whole number of programmes that fitted or aligned with the Fotofeis themes of mortality, urban myths and diaspora. That work was all selected from, again, works that we knew about from previous New Visions, but also work that was brought in from international partners. The selection panel of that, I can't quite recall apart from ourselves directly. But the Fotofeis touring packages, in October of 1995 (by which time I had joined Street Level), various programmes went to Aberdeen Art Centre; Paisley Museum and Art Gallery; CCA; Dundee Art Gallery which was in the Seagate at the time, it was Dundee Printmakers' Workshop, now DCA; Stills in Edinburgh; Eden Court in Inverness; The Lemon Tree in Aberdeen; Filmhouse in Edinburgh; Steps in Dundee. So, we were getting stuff out on the road there. There's a detailed report on that, audience questionnaire—you'd asked about audience—got all the stats, broken down on that, who were they? Where did they come from? All that kind of stuff. That was all providing evidence to the Scottish Arts Council to say, 'look, this is a viable area of practice that needs its own investment here. There's a lot of interest in this area of work, give it more support.' That was the argument that we were using to the Scottish Arts Council. *Infosource* continued, so spring/summer of 1996—this is the other one that was produced.

MJ: I hadn't even heard about these before, so this is great information.

MD: There was a lot of sharing of information in *Infosource* at the time as well as the programmes that New Visions were putting on. Café Flicker is in that, Young People Speak Out, a diversity of things, a plurality of practice. I suppose that then led into New Visions that happened in 1996, and Paula and Ann were both coordinating that, and that was just incredible. I was involved insofar as I was working at Street Level at the time and as I've mentioned Street Level was one of the partners with New Visions in the past, as well as other places. During New Visions in 1996, Street Level put on three video installations: one by Tina Keane, Keith Stutter and another by Stephen Hurrell. The Stephen Hurrell one was a commission that New Visions had done with Hull Time Based Arts. So, that was the outcome of that, it was a three-screen installation work as far as I can recall. All of that is in the programme for 1996. [...] I guess that probably extended the reach that the festival in 1994 had started to do and then the various single screen programmes that we had done thereafter.

There were other partners that got involved in 1996 such as the Gallery of Modern Art, but too many things to even mention in terms of the various strands within that.

By the time the reports were being done, maybe the Scottish Arts Council was getting the sign that ‘these folk aren’t going to go away, what are we going to do about this? But, we can’t fund two festivals.’ So, we gradually came together in discussions about how we could amplify what we did respectively. We—New Visions and the FFVF—both wanted our own festivals and wanted to retain our own identities and our own path moving forward whilst at the same time appreciating what the Scottish Arts Council were saying. To put it in a nutshell, no, that was not to be the case. They increasingly put the thumb screws on, to put it crudely, and said, we want a working group from the two festivals to come together to talk about a merger, basically. That’s what gradually happened over time.

Running in parallel to those discussions, the Scottish Arts Council commissioned one or two fairly well-funded reports by a couple of consultancy agencies. I don’t want to get on to the hobby horse of complaining but probably the money that went into the two consultancies exceeded all the investment that they’d put into both of those festivals in their entire history. Of course, we all know what the outcome of that was. [...] There was a recognised need for an equipment resource in Scotland, so that was attempting to model itself upon MITES, which was the Moving Image Technology Exhibition Service that was based at Moviola in Liverpool, and we felt that was needed in Scotland, because there was an increasing number of artists from Smith/Stewart and Douglas Gordon who couldn’t get access to the equipment they needed to actually show their work. Most equipment would be hired in from MITES in Liverpool. The aim of those reports was to identify whether there was a demand and whether it was going to be financially realistic to do so.

That was a fairly substantial couple of reports that were produced by Positive Solutions from Liverpool. That was then augmented by another consultancy that Clive Gillman and Eddie Berg did in 1997 about an exhibition technology resource for Scotland. The Scottish Arts Council had commissioned then another consultancy which was about looking at the open access workshops in Scotland. Now there was a different head of the Scottish Arts Council at the Visual Arts Panel at that time and there was definitely a feeling, a manoeuvre to try and reduce the funding to all the workshop sector within Scotland. Peter Davis from Newcastle who did that consultancy, his report that came back wasn’t quite to the liking of the director of the Visual Arts Panel at the time, Sue Daniel-McElroy, I remember. They wanted cuts and he said, ‘well, actually, rather than cutting this sector it needs more money.’ And in a strange twist, what the Scottish Arts Council came up with was rather than fund the workshops for more, was announce that they were going to fund a new agency for moving image and that became the Moving Image Art Agency, as you know. Which, at that time, had personnel from FFVF, Dave Cummings and [...] Chris Byrne, [...] and then Paula and Ann were also involved from the New Visions side of it.

So, Moving Image Art Agency became established as a company in of itself and then moved to become New Media Scotland. Myself and Chris Byrne were developing some ideas round about New Media Scotland, so we went off five days to a remote location on the Isle of Lewis, to lock our heads together about what we could do with New Media Scotland, at this time Paula and Ann are still involved, I should say, but myself and Chris were charged with developing a proposal that we could put to the Scottish Arts Council. Our proposal was for a series of ten digital art commissions and three moving image commissions which was successful in receiving funding. We partnered with a number of organisations across Scotland including Peacock in Aberdeen, Stills in Edinburgh, Pier Arts Centre, and Street Level

Photoworks. The pressure was then on, New Media Scotland couldn't be done by committee in the eyes of the Scottish Arts Council, it needed a Director in terms of the legal structure of it. New people were brought in to the board—I wasn't involved at that time—a job was advertised for the director, Chris Byrne got it, so that was a new era for NMS, and the end of the previous festivals and way of doing things. I was involved thereafter for a little while and then on the New Media Scotland board for a short period of time before I wasn't really needed to be involved with it, was kind of going off in a different direction by that point, by which time the landscape for individual practice was changing slightly.

MJ: Would this be the late 1990s or the early 2000s?

MD: This was 1999.

MJ: Thanks for all that, that was really insightful. I'm aware that we're now at an hour and forty-one minutes, so I don't want to keep you too long. I've got this list of questions but I feel like we've really covered the vast majority of them. I guess I just want to give you an opportunity to point to anything else that you think is important, maybe in Street Level? I'd mentioned an exhibition called *Infinitude* [2000] that I think you'd curated; do you have anything to say after that?

MD: Yeah, I was invited by The Gallery of Modern Art to create an exhibition to take place in the basement—there were discussions within Culture and Leisure Services about closing that as a gallery space and possibly opening a library. I think the curatorial staff at the Gallery wanted to do something different and contemporary with that space. GoMA was still trying to shake off the bad reputation it had amongst the contemporary art scene that remained after Julian Spalding had left Glasgow. I think that was one of the motivations for them thinking about something round about a new media theme and that's where I came up with *Infinitude*. The title was reflective of a certain continuum to things. Within it, it was about bringing together certain artistic practices within that moment in time. It was all fairly contemporary work: Daniel Reeves, Dalziel + Scullion, Stephen Healy, Pernille Spence, Steve Hollingsworth. It was quite a big exhibition and quite a feat to pull off in fact. There is some documentation, but not any that you will find online.

MJ: Is there anything else that I'm maybe not aware of that you might want to point out to me?

MD: Just going back to New Visions in 1996 when I was in Street Level at the time. There was still a great interest in the work that artists were doing in video and installation in that's been reflected in the Street Level programme to some extent, so after Stephen Hurrell and Tina Keane in 1996, in 1997 we had a CD-ROM exhibition, in 1999 a Steve Partridge exhibition, Mhairi Sutherland in 2000. Ann Vance did a film installation also. Adinda van 't Klooster, Glasgow-based, in 2003. 2005, *Invisible Fields*, and that was women artists working across photography, video and film, that coincided with the first Glasgow International and to tie in with that we organised a conference that took place at the Tron Theatre which was called *Video>>Art>>Scotland*. We invited various speakers to that including Steven Bode from Film and Video Umbrella, someone from Montevideo in the Netherland, Francis McKee contributed, myself. We recorded that conference. It was followed in 2006, at the time we had an exhibition by Mark Neville at Street Level called *The Jump Films*, which was his 16mm installation work, that marked a transition between Street Level's old space and the fact that we had to move out for that building to be redeveloped into what it is now, Trongate 103. So, the theme of *Jump Films* was quite an appropriate one.

Just as a footnote, we did another exhibition of Mark Neville at the same time at the Dick Institute in Kilmarnock which was his Port Glasgow photographic works. The conference in 2006 was called *The Work of Media Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction*. That took place at the CCA. That was an interesting one. Steve Partridge spoke about REWIND, which was relatively early days for REWIND. Speakers were Chris Meigh-Andrews, Daniel Reeves, Rudolph Frieling of ZKM, Tina Fiske, and Mark Neville. [...] It was a two-day symposium and I guess the theme was about preserving the history of media art and initiatives round about that with that first day being a guided tour of video art through early exponents of analogue and film formats. The second involved a range of speakers from the MAG-NET network which was a magazine network of electronic cultural publishers—Alessandro Ludovico from *Neural* magazine, someone from *Umelec* magazine in the Slovak Republic, Simon Worthington from *Mute*, there's a certain continuity within that going back to the New Visions strand of 1994, the Digital Deviance one there.

So, there is a continuity in the concerns that manifested themselves in some of the Street Level work. We recorded that conference which we shared on *dotcrawl.org*, a website we had developed and established at Street Level which was about supporting new media practices, so it included writing and documentation and various other things. The site's architecture isn't compatible with current operating systems but we do have the content backed up, though not viewable in the same way. Neither do we have the original video work of all that documentation as they were dealt with by the person who was dealing with the website, we just have very small compressed files from the conference itself but that is also quite good resource material for future researchers. I'd quite like to get that into some other place that can act as an accessible again

Then moving forward, *Lost and Found* in 2010 restaged installations that referred back to that first video art installation project at the Third Eye Centre in 1976 and the project in Transmission in 1986 as well. Some of the artists involved were asked to update their work for that video wall that I reference much earlier in this discussion. Documentation does exist of that, some of the interviews with some of the artists we do have on our YouTube channel, that I can search out and send to you should that be of any interest to you at all. 2010 is ten years ago but that's almost bringing us up to the present time. I don't want to use the word too much but there are continuities through all that period of time that kind of keep issues alive as practice itself is developing.

MJ: That's been fantastic, thank you so much Malcolm for running me through that.

MD: Just another footnote as well. I was looking at *MAP* online and the piece that I wrote in an early issue called 'Absent Narratives' which was written in response to Mason Leaver-Yap's piece which was in the issue previous. In looking back at Mason's piece, it's been rewritten in response to what I was saying. Of course, there's always absent narratives, it depends on who is doing the reading. And one of those absences was *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* that happened at the Third Eye Centre. Mason had noted a starting point of video as being a show much later and in Edinburgh. So, when you look back on it now, they've actually incorporated my response into their earlier piece. I think that is an interesting piece of revisionism because it or the magazine *MAP* has not acknowledged that the original article is corrected on the basis of my written response which in turns make my piece look petty—if anyone bothered to look that closely of course.

I guess that piece that I wrote in *MAP* was quite a stimulus actually in subsequent writing that's happened, that being the piece that's in the REWIND book for example. That chapter

contains a lot of stuff round about this area, but you're familiar with that one. A slight update to some extent, focusing on the work of Stansfield and Hooykaas which is in the more recent book, *EWVA European Women's Video Art in the 70s and 80s* [2019] that just came out earlier this year I think. There we go.

MJ: I'm just looking at my questions and I've only really got one that I'd like to ask you if you've still got some time, and it's shifting from this history that we've been building up and more about your opinions and views on things, it's just about nationhood and Scottishness and whether you think that is different to other contexts that you've seen or whether nationhood is something that's important in this story to you?

MD: Nationhood, cultural identity is important to anyone in any particular place. [...] Nationhood is important in terms of constructing the voices and the practices round about culture. It has always been important and perhaps even more so now. Why wouldn't any place seek their own self-determination in terms of their own voice, but in partnership with all those other self-determined nations. It is all about partnership, it's not about division. The thing about the Scottish voice is that it has always had to shout louder to rise above the mediocre and that which would seek to conceal the innovations that have happened. That's why the issue of there's always been parallel developments in Scotland when they've been happening in London, it's always been an issue for me and that remains an issue. You're probably looking for something a bit more there.

C. Charles Esche

Marcus Jack: To start, I wonder if you could provide me with a bit of a professional life story, I don't know where you'd want to start that but maybe post-education?

Charles Esche: Yeah, post-education. So, I did an MA in Manchester. I was born in England of German parents, so never quite sure where I belonged in some ways. Then I did an MA in Manchester in Museum Studies and then after that I got a couple of jobs: one in Liverpool with the National Museum and Galleries on Merseyside which was, I think, the last year—in 1990, I think. Then I was two or three years in Kettle's Yard in Cambridge, as a kind of assistant. So, the first job where I could really start programming was Tramway and that was 1993, I'm sure about that and that's when I moved to Scotland and in some ways, I haven't left, although I've been working outwith Scotland for a long time. I did a couple things in Kettle's Yard which I could talk about but basically Tramway was the first place that I had the opportunity to shape a programme, rather than just to do an individual project. So that's really where it sort of started for me.

MJ: So, if Tramway started in 1990, do you have an idea of what you were going into?

CE: I mean I knew about it, I'd been there. There was a show about AIDS which Nicola White had done—Nicola White was my predecessor—and I think she was the first Visual Arts—I think it was called Visual Arts Officer but I sort of changed it to Director at a certain point because I hated the idea of being in the army. She was the only person before, there was only Nicola and then me, I don't think there was anyone else there. And Neil Wallace was the head of Tramway which was then this, often called Tramway Theatre at that point and was often seen more as a performing arts venue, so we were always fighting for visual arts for a kind of identity and a recognition, certainly in terms of the public, that was really tough.

But we had in a sense and at our disposal, this amazing, awkward and particular space: the main tram hall, and then we created also project rooms so we had some more flexible space and then there were two theatres, one small one and one larger one which, again, was a big open space which had a movable set of seats. And that was the building basically there. The stables were just a ruin, there were pigeons in there and things like that, what's now become the studios and things like that upstairs. The space that you now know as Tramway was actually quite a lot bigger because you just walked in through the main doors and that was it, there was no real entrance or anything, nothing was built. There was a small side room as well so there were two project spaces that we could use, which were all just left over from the original tram depot.

In a sense, a lot of these buildings, apart from one that we built, a lot of the rooms themselves were just accidental and then you found things to do with them. Endlessly talking about what to do with the stables but it was after my time that they actually got the money to be able to expand and to do that and also do the gardens, the gardens were just wild at the back. You could go out there but they were not accessible to anybody else. So that was the state of the building and it had really been opened in 1990 for the [European] City of Culture which was this big event which is seen in retrospect as being transformative and I have my doubts, I think that transformation was more to do with a certain attention that came from the metropolitan centre.

You have to reconstruct the time in those 1990s. There was almost no political sense of Scotland, Scotland didn't have a civic society basically, it was entirely British. It had been

entirely British from the late-nineteenth century, more or less, and certainly since the Second World War. There was nothing. I got interested in the SNP and I would vote SNP but at that point they were quite a marginal party really. What you had was this hardcore, racist Labour party basically, and maybe I see that more in retrospect. It was the first time I came across really direct political corruption, was in Glasgow City Council and the Labour Party, they had absolute confidence that they would always be in power and they were very much in it for themselves. And yet, there was this vibrant culture which was covered by things like Street Level and Transmission and things like that, I think within the visual art and within theatre, things like Citizens Theatre, that got to the attention of the media in a certain way in 1990.

So in a sense it was all there, it was just that in 1990 it was pointed out, and even not so much to London but actually it got attention from the international media and I think that's what worried London, because London had never felt that there was ever in any way anywhere else that existed in the hinterlands as it saw the rest of the United Kingdom, or the rest of the Empire. To be honest, it's still an imperial city, so it has the Empire and this empire is what it occupies and suddenly there was this place that was getting recognised in Germany or in different places. I think that that 1990 myth: somebody came in and created Glasgow out of nothing, and the [Hans Ulrich] Obrist idea of the *Glasgow Miracle* is really dubious because it doesn't give credit to places like Street Level and Transmission, and also to the painters of the late 1980s and things like that, The Glasgow Boys—I mean there were problems with that for sure but also they managed to internationalise the situation, in a way that I think was really important.

So, where are we going. So, 1993 I came in and I knew that it was a challenging space I suppose. I was also pretty young so I also didn't really think so much about it. I wanted to be in Scotland, I quite wanted to contribute to that, I'd met a couple of artists like Christine Borland and Ross Sinclair and things like that, before they were together, independently, and it was clear that something was going on, that was emerging out of that course that David Harding lead in GSA. So, it felt like this was a good thing to do, I kind of walked into it blind largely.

MJ: I guess maybe from there if we could go through some programming things and if you had any views or comments on exhibitions that happened. I've got a list of four here but this is really just what I've been able to parse from reading, there might be things that I have totally missed. Those are, year by year, *24 Hour Psycho* of course in 1993, *V-Topia* in 1994, *Trust* in 1995, and an exhibition called *Film Culture* in 1996.

CE: What I would add would be, certainly those four were most of the ones that contained moving image, I think there were important shows that were related to that programme. Two solo shows that I thought were important that weren't recognised, the ones I wanted to mention, which were the Stephen Willats solo exhibition and an Allan Sekula solo exhibition, which were both in that big space and, for me, were quite significant also in their conception because you saw the depoliticisation that happened as a result of 1990 as well, that's really the 1990s, the post-Cold War period. And the YBA phenomenon, which was also depoliticised, depoliticising as a framework, and whether people wanted to get on board with that or not, and those kinds of questions. We did a show called *Sugar Hiccup* with Richard Wright and Sam Samore and Elizabeth Ballet, so that's less relevant. There was a photography show with Roddy Buchanan. We did Jonathan Monk, David Shrigley. There was this show—what was it called—which was together with a Dutch organisation, together with the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, it was called *The Unbelievable Truth* and it had

John Shankie, who was also working with some video, and David Shrigley, and Fanni Niemi Junkola who was a Finnish artist who was making video in Glasgow at the time—I don't know if you've come across her. I don't know what happened to her but she came from Finland. We made an exchange with the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

I think a lot of the focus of those kinds of exhibitions was very much about trying to internationalise the scene in Glasgow, to step around London in a way and the London art scene, and try and connect, particularly with Europe because Europe was the big unknown territory in a certain way in the early 1990s, sounds absurd now but it was like that was the place that you could get a different recognition, and be recognised for yourself rather than all these ethnic assumptions that come in London from being Scottish, and boxes that they want to put you in. That opened up another discussion. I remember when we took *24 Hour Psycho* to Kunst-Werke in Berlin, that was very important for Douglas [Gordon] but also for me because it meant that we could build these relationships directly rather than feeling that you had to go through—you know in the 1980s I think went through the British Council, so go through the queen in a way, or they went through London by being organised by a London gallery or by being organised by the Arts Council [of Great Britain] or whatever. I don't know quite when there was cultural devolution or separation but when I first started, which must have been 1988 or something like that, there was an Arts Council of Great Britain, based in London, that had a Scottish branch which sponsored some tartan or something like that but basically that was totally centralised so everything had to go through London. Still into the 1980s.

MJ: That devolution and the formation of the Scottish Arts Council as an autonomous body was in 1994.

CE: You see so it was quite late.

MJ: Do you remember a difference, because you would have been working just before then and after: did that effect any kind of change in being an organiser?

CE: Yeah, I think you could have a discussion amongst yourselves. There wasn't constantly this need to refer to the Queen, to the imperial authority. I remember we did a show with, which probably had some video in it, with Bruce Maclean at one point. He was from that other generation of Scottish artist who had moved to London and had no concept of the idea that you would want to stay in Glasgow, and hated being Scottish—said he was British—you know that generation. Was sort of ashamed of it in a way because he wanted to be included in this imperial discourse and he didn't want to be different so he kept his accent but apart from that basically didn't see any distinction, or didn't want to draw a distinction but then also was sort of ashamed of where he came from and why he had to accept that slightly second-class status, it was a struggle for him.

So, I think there was that generation that were still around, I mean they're still voting, and still around to some extent, that were very British nationalist in the sense that they were engaged in this imperial project, I would say. I mean I'm reading it quite politically now, I'm not sure I would read it quite the same way although I was conscious of that then.

MJ: That makes sense, and people like Mark Boyle and the Boyle Family as well might testify to that.

CE: Yeah.

MJ: You've mentioned *24 Hour Psycho* and that's something that is steeped in so much lore and is this lynchpin of the Glasgow Miracle narrative. I wonder if you could talk about that?

CE: So, that was something that I inherited basically in that Nicola White had programmed it, had spoken to Douglas [Gordon] about the idea of doing it. I remember Douglas coming to see me—we're more or less the same age but suddenly I had this power so there was this strange hierarchy—coming to see me to see if I would still want to do it or not. It was something that absolutely wasn't my idea, it was Nicola's and Nicola's relation together with Douglas. I knew Christine [Borland] and Ross [Sinclair], I didn't know Douglas at that time, so it was also the wrong order in terms of the hierarchy as they fell out later. He was somebody who was there and he'd been a technician or an installer at Tramway beforehand. For me it was like a question, 'does this make sense?' and 'should we do it?' and I thought twice about it, yeah. I thought, 'does it make sense to just slow down Hitchcock's *Psycho* to twenty-four hours? What does it say?' But I mean he was, as he's remained I suppose to some extent, he was then very persuasive and very charismatic and it all seemed fairly quickly to make sense but I remember thinking, 'OK, I have this, in a way I'm inheriting this and I should stick to it.' Obviously, it was our responsibility to stick to Nicola's decisions, but also thinking, 'OK, but what does this exactly mean for me,' and as a curator this would be the first project that I would be the director of in a way and the first thing that I could in some way influence.

MJ: Do you remember anything about the reception it had?

CE: I think it was right from the beginning, it was sort of within the artworld. I think in those days, particularly that generation, so somebody like Douglas or in different ways, Nathan Coley, they were very concerned to talk to the artworld. The idea was to get recognition from London, in a way, particularly from the galleries and maybe also the international field. There wasn't a real desire to connect to another kind of public, a public that was outwith the art field. So, the fact that at the opening Nicholas Logsdail, who was then the director of the Lisson Gallery, came, a few other people came from London, I think maybe [...] the guy who set up *Frieze*, Stuart Morgan, and people like that who were players to some extent in the yBa but a bit to the side, it wasn't your Jay Joplings or Damien Hirsts or whatever, the sort of players in a slightly minor key. They came up to the opening and so that was amazing for everybody, they would recognise that and come all the way to Glasgow, because people didn't come out of London.

There was some press attention, there was something in *The Guardian* which was again, not to be expected, it meant that there was a buzz around it. I'd known Klaus Biesenbach, in those days he was still a medical student, who was working in Kunst-Werke and so I wrote him a letter completely not thinking that I'd ever get a reply, it might have even been a letter—certainly wasn't email, might have been a fax or something like that, to say, 'we're doing this show and it would be interesting to show in Kunst-Werke' because a couple years before I'd installed an exhibition there with an artist and then I got to know them when it was a collective, there's a long history of Kunst-Werke which is interesting. I wrote to him and he wrote back and said, 'yeah, let's do it in Kunst-Werke.' So, he sort of knew that Douglas was trendy and somebody that would be worthwhile seeing, which was surprising for me, I was less conscious of it. I think Douglas was more conscious of it for sure but I was less conscious of the fact that he was being recognised in that way. Those things started to tell me this was probably a good decision to allow Nicola's programme to continue. Then we were

close for quite a long time, we were working together on different things, we did something in Leipzig and we did something in Karlsruhe, particularly in Germany at that point.

MJ: To me it seems like such a turning point in reception to moving image work in Scotland, going from quite underground, Transmission related activity, much smaller in scale, to this, quite quick blow-up. Even in popular press which I've seen from the time, it seems to have been received exceptionally well. I'm interested in what factors contributed to that, it does seem to have come out of nowhere.

CE: It was really Douglas and his power of self-promotion and charisma, I think that that carried a lot of it, and his argument around it. I think it was the audacity of the work in a way, it was the simplicity and audacity of the work itself, that you just take somebody else's work and slow it down and that's your gesture. A lot of the issues that we had were around the technical, how do you slow—I think they were U-Matics that we were playing on—so how do you slow a U-Matic player down and things like that. There were a lot of questions about how you would actually realise it. Then this radical simplicity of just hanging a screen in the space. I've found some photographs and things like that of all this recently in some files so maybe I should send them to you, they're on old [...] slides.

MJ: If I could move onto *V-Topia*, which seems like an interesting project as well, a collaboration with FACT, or Moviola before that, and Film and Video Umbrella. Could you tell me about how that came together?

CE: The thing that I was installing in Kunst-Werke was together with Moviola, so I got to know Eddie [Berg] and we got on very well, we're still in contact. So, it really came about between that: I had this space and we were talking together, and with Steven Bode at the time, we were all quite close, and we wanted to do something. We responded to the idea of us moving into a virtual condition. [...] I'd need to see the book to go through all the artists but we started to talk about an exhibition, which I think was in Liverpool as well—I really have to reconstruct this so you'll have to tell me—but essentially we started talking about this and I remember the first trip we made together was New York, together with Steve and Eddie, and we started talking to Tony Oursler, talking to a few other people. We started to put together the *V-Topia* exhibition, and at the same time I was there also looking for the *Trust* exhibition. So, they sort of crossed over a little bit in terms of the planning, they were different exhibitions and different projects but I was connecting the two together.

The essence and the name came out of discussions, I can't remember who it came from, but it was really this idea: are there artists that are working in an interesting way in the digital world—I don't even know if we'd call it the digital world, maybe the virtual world or virtual reality. There was another vocabulary then because this is 1994 and 1995 was *Trust*. I think the idea for *V-Topia* probably predated—we already organised a discussion around the principle of *V-Topia* before I got the job in Tramway. This idea was that we were going to do something in Liverpool and then I said, 'let's also bring it to Tramway, makes sense, let's bring these two together.' Now I could also put a bit of money in and things like that so there was also a gathering of forces there. Then we had this trip to New York, it was very much this big exploration of the city and certain artists and institutions within it, I remember hooking up with Barbara London for instance who was curator of film and video at MoMA, and going to Electronic Arts Intermix, I suppose it still exists, this library of lots of moving image work in America, and I remember going to screening rooms and just seeing lots of stuff from documentary to early video.

I'd have to look through the artist list but I'm vaguely remembering some names, it's a while since I've thought about it. Later I worked with them on what they did which was called Video Positive, so we curated together a couple of Video Positives, one which was in 1998 and another Video Positive that we did before that, can't remember. So that relationship went right through the 1990s and into the 2000s. Eddie then transformed Moviola, I think it was around 2000 or so, into FACT and got a new building. I was quite involved in that, just as a gossip in a way—somebody who was around a lot and would talk a lot about it. I remember the crises we went through in terms of the managing of FACT and the fact he thought he'd have to resign at one point, I'll always remember that, those discussions. Really through that whole 1990s period we were quite close and then when I left Scotland in 2000 to start working in Sweden, at that point we lost touch a bit.

MJ: I've got a related question that maybe has a quick answer but the two projects we've already talked about went on to tour. Do you think something has changed in the way that exhibitions tour, does that happen less now or is it just coincidence?

CE: That's interesting. I mean within the British Empire I don't think things tour very much now, do they not? They tend to just be in one place.

MJ: I'd say it's quite rare. Occasionally a work that has been co-commissioned will tour, a single work, but it's rare to see exhibitions move around.

CE: Yeah, there's a sort of investment of the ego of the curator I suppose which is something that was maybe less—although, yeah, we were also curating things together so we were all claiming—I think that was something new, I think before there was the idea that you would have a programmer, more almost on a theatrical model, that would look around at what exhibitions there are and then bring them to that place. If you think about theatre plays they travel around many, many sites within Great Britain or whatever. So, I think that the ego of the curator became more artistic in this period, from the early 1990s onwards. Maybe that has something to do with the fact that people are less keen on taking somebody else's idea. They want to work directly with the artist and want to be involved in commissioning. You know, we got into the neoliberal idea of productivism, that everything is about production and everything is about new and everything is about innovation and I think the artworld swallowed the neoliberal pill completely in that sense. I'd be very critical of that now but I think that was certainly to do with the curatorial ego and the idea that what's important is new production. Therefore, touring made less sense. I think for me, I know that for instance going to Kunst-Werke with *24 Hour Psycho*, but also, I think for me doing something with Liverpool and with FACT were important in expressing alliances that were not through London. I think that what I can remember is really a desire to try and show that there were different connections. I know that at an earlier stage, before I was Glasgow, that Craig Richardson and Douglas and Christine and Julie Roberts had done a show in Ireland, in Dublin, the Irish Museum of Modern Art which had just opened. I think for them that was very important. I learned in some sense from them, and I also had in my own political upbringing, this sort of resistance to the imperial centre. This touring in that sense was quite important to us, to collaborate with places and even Liverpool felt a little bit different to London and certainly Berlin was definitely different.

MJ: I guess from there I wonder if we could move on to *Trust* [1995], which from my understanding was quite a controversial exhibition.

CE: You can find some stuff in *The Herald* and things like that which talked about. There are some interesting articles, Clare Henry was writing about it.

MJ: I've been through Clare Henry's archive and she seems to have been quite a critic of it, but also relaying a public conversation which happened in which Ken Currie was attacking the exhibition. I wonder if you could just tell me a bit more about that?

CE: The idea of *Trust* really came about from the trust between this small group of people. So, Katrina [Brown] who was the Assistant Curator or Assistant Director, so was working together with me, and Nathan [Coley], that was the team basically: me, Katrina and Nathan. [...] And then the artists who we'd worked with, so it was Douglas [Gordon], we did projects with Jacqui [Jacqueline] Donachie, you know the audio work? That's sort of media I think in a certain way, you can understand it as that as well. So, the four artists we'd worked with in the previous two years, that was Douglas—Douglas was the first one which I'd inherited from Nicola [White] but then in a sense I adopted it as a model, it seemed to work—so then I invited, by turn, Jacqui, Christine [Borland], and Roddy Buchanan. I think that was right. Nathan was the technician, so wasn't involved in the curation. [...] So, Douglas, Christine, Roddy, and Jacqui, and the two of us: Katrina and me.

The six of us formed a curatorium, a sort of group, we would use that German word because we'd learnt it from Berlin. As a curatorium we put the exhibition together and essentially based it on the very simple idea that we'd already established relationships with certain people, and particularly from the artists—Douglas was very social and therefore had made a lot of connections with interesting people. I remember following up some of those connections with people like Tony Oursler, I followed that up in New York when I went for that trip with Steven and Eddie. Then we really produced the exhibition out of that and out of some old connections, like Stan Douglas was in the exhibition because he'd been in *Transmission* the year or a couple of years before. Things like that, he'd been an important person to invite to that project.

All the artists came out, there was a filmmaker Marijke van Warmerdam for instance, who has gone a bit quiet now but she was working quite a lot in moving image in the Netherlands and I'd met her when I'd been in the Netherlands at some point, so I invited her there and Katrina invited some people she'd been close to. We developed it out of this idea of networks, so rather than saying it's about anything or it's a group show, it's really a sort of mapping of relationships. You could see it as a sort of early form of Glasgow artists trying to say they had an international framework and international relationships that weren't only London. I think that was quite important. That refrain comes back. One way also was that we were trying all the time to tour the exhibitions, so we were trying to tour Christine's show which ended up in a different form in Münster and things like that. We were trying to tour Jacqui's show but had less success with that. We were trying to tour Roddy's show. Trying to get them out into the world. It felt like we were then asking all these people to host us, in a way, so we wanted to host them, wanted them to come back. So, *Trust* was this relationship of our community and our generation, it felt like a community we were all around about the same age, with a network that wasn't controlled by the imperial strictures of Britishness.

MJ: Why do you think it came under so much fire?

CE: Because I think it was a challenge to a certain accepted idea of what Scottish art was, that had to know its place. It was a challenge aesthetically, so for someone like Ken Currie, it was like this is not—this is true, yeah—it wasn't for and didn't come out of a heroizing of

working-class culture. It was almost trying to escape from that by saying we're part of a European intellectualism in a way. Pretentiously, maybe, absolutely could see that as being pretentious but I think that's what was troubling, that it wasn't conforming to either the idea of, like, Bruce McLean or the Boyle Family, basically being randomly from Glasgow but being a British-London subject, nor was it conforming to this idea of very strong, regional tartan-shortbread thing.

I have a lot of respect for people like Ken Currie actually, and Steven Campbell—he was already in America at that point—but they weren't, their image of Scotland was something that we were, at the time, trying to escape, I think, that it was this male, working-class, hard labour, honest—whiteness as well [...] the people that now vote Brexit in a way, at least in England. It feels like that was the community they were trying to speak to and we weren't trying to speak to that and maybe we were a bit dismissive of that community and wanted to break away from it. It was an act of antagonism I suppose, so we shouldn't be surprised if it was received with antagonism [...] I think what was interesting is that, for me, and I think this is true for Douglas as well and maybe Christine, the line of connection within Scottish art for that show was people like Alan Johnston and Glen Onwin and the Edinburgh, more conceptual practices, who had been in Germany, and had seen already that bridge between Scotland and Europe as being one that was more important than the bridge between Scotland and London.

I think how we would have seen it at the time would be that Ken Currie and Campbell, and Adrian Wiszniewski, they were conforming to the expectations that the imperial centre had imposed upon Scotland, or Glasgow. It was like, 'this is the art that should come out of Glasgow, it should look like this, and it should be done by men like this, and they should paint women like this, this is it what it should be.' I think for all of us that was a red rag, why should we do it like that? I think that that provocation for someone like Ken Currie—he understood, he's a smart person, he understood that that was a displacement of his position and also it was a kind of insult to a sort of working-class authenticity. It wasn't interested in that working-class authenticity and it was sort of insulting, so it was harsh in that way. It was aggressive I think, in its mildness even, but within an art context, there was an aggression in it, and I think that's why it got that—that moment became clear: this is something that doesn't want to play the old game. I would also be critical about our position now, that's where it's difficult but I'm trying to—because I believed in it then—put as positive a spin on it now, though I see it as problematic now, absolutely.

MJ: Yeah, I've heard that position being called Clydesidism before which makes sense to me. There's another question which *Trust* raises, as a break between the previous two exhibitions, and it's about media and media specificity. I guess in 1995, maybe there's a lot of discourse beginning to emerge about the post-medium condition and things like that. Do you have a sense of, with that exhibition, integrating all these different forms of practice: did that feel new or different?

CE: It felt very deliberate. I think that was also a result—now thinking about it, it's good to come back to it—it felt like a break from *V-Topia*. *V-Topia* was a media show, and this is a conversation I had and never really agreed in the end with Eddie, because there was a sort of media ghetto, I think, or there was a lot of discussion that media art was somehow not art or art didn't include media art, that they were sort of separate. There were some people going back to the 1970s who wanted to claim it as a different kind of art, had different distribution mechanisms, was maybe more democratic, was allowed to find its audience in different ways than these hallowed halls of the museum, which I understand but I think, again, from our

point of view, we were trying to get into the artworld. The artworld was the object, the artworld was the destination. [...] So, for somebody like Douglas, the idea that he was a media artist would have been quite appalling: just be an artist, and be a conceptual artist, or a contemporary artist, but not a media artist. His references were conceptual art from the 1960s and 1970s, people like Laurence Wiener, who was in *Trust*.

When we did *V-Topia*, for him and for a number of people in my community, there was a lot of critique that I was building up this ghetto. There was a distrust with the focus on technology as the binding medium. I think that *Trust* came out of that sense of distrust of media art and saying, ‘no, we should just do everything the same. We should have a Cady Noland sculpture next to a Stan Douglas video, next to a Marijke van Warmerdam, next to a Laurence Wiener text on the wall, and we should just recognise the whole thing as being of equal interest. It’s about the work itself and the relationships you build with that work.’

For me as a curator, more so than the artists, I wanted to see whether we could build a relationship between this idea of trust that we had and the public, but I didn’t really know how to do it and that was a step too far for me but it was something that I wanted to do. So, I thought, ‘well, we can use trust also as a way to try and build trust in our audience, to just allow us, to take this for what it is. Don’t come with a set of preconceptions about what it should be but just for what it is and trust us to bring you something that might be interesting.’ The appeal of trust on the other hand, we had this trust within the group and then this trust with this wider network, and then for me as a curator—and I think it was less important for the artists, which is interesting—but for me as a curator, it was: can we build a trust with that potential user group of people who might come see the exhibitions? That wasn’t really active because we didn’t have many visitors.

MJ: In your position trying to broker this relationship with the audience, at this time do you feel like Tramway was on its own? Did you have allies?

CE: Transmission and CCA, absolutely. There was the three of us. We had less connection with Edinburgh I think. It was Graeme Murray who was in Fruitmarket and had a different agenda, and obviously you had the Julian Spalding situation in the city council. I even had to go to some meetings, a couple of meetings with him because I was also part of the city council but in a different department. There were museums and there was performing arts, and because Tramway was more of a theatre, I was under performing arts. So, I wasn’t directly under him otherwise we couldn’t have done anything. Bob Palmer, who was head of performing arts, had allowed me to do this stuff and CCA got money directly from the Scottish Arts Council, or probably the British arts council [ACGB] at that time. So, they were also free from Spalding’s influence, and Transmission was the same.

So, we felt ourselves to be the resistance to the Spaldingisation of Glasgow post-1990. [...] Richard Calvocoressi [Director of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 1987–2007] was also completely dismissive of the idea that any Scot could make art essentially, he really believed that it was impossible for someone genetically Scottish to make art and he was the head of the gallery. I remember that I went to him and said, ‘do you think you could buy *24 Hour Psycho*? Maybe it could be for sort of £5,000 or something’ and he could buy it for the collection and he almost laughed me out of the room.

MJ: I mean there’s been a historicisation of that toxicity but I did want to ask how bad it was or whether—there’s a lot of writing in things like *Variant* magazine that’s

addressing these issues with Julian Spalding and GoMA—but being on the ground did it feel like it was pretty monstrous?

CE: Yeah. It did. Because he had the money and the influence and he had the confidence and he had the city council with him. Pat Lally and the city council were absolutely supporting it and it felt like that was a continuation of what you called Clydesidism but done by an English aristocrat, which is sort of the worst of the worst. Then this idea of putting—classically Beryl Cook or whatever, taking her as an archetypal Blackpool seaside painter, but somebody who could talk to stupid Glaswegians because Glaswegians are too stupid to look at anything else but something that's funny and sexy, in a certain way, and sort of base, has a sort of simplicity to it—let's go for the simple, emotional tricks.

It was a sort of right-wing populism as I understood it that was based in a patrician assumption about what a Glaswegian might be. I remember there was this line, and I wish I'd bought the book but I was so antagonistic to it, there was a first edition of the guide to GoMA when it opened, he was talking about *con-art*—conceptual art as being con-art—and then he said, 'we all know that a painting,' like a Magritte painting, 'is not a pipe,' *Ce n'est pas une pipe*, 'we all understand that because you cannot play it.' So, he hadn't even looked at the painting because he thought it was a pipe that you play and not a pipe that you smoke. I always thought that just said everything about the set of assumptions he was making about stupid—maybe he'd seen it and just thought it was a joke that nobody would pick up, I don't know. But, this sort of patrician vulgarity in a way, trying to speak to the plebs from this position that he adopted, was the most, I think, tone deaf but obviously had the support of this Labour mafia that was in control of the city, which was also very much invested in this Clydesidism.

So, there was also the culture minister at the time, he then became an MSP for Labour—I'm sure he's lost his seat now, what was he called? Then he came into the city council again quite high up—can't remember. But I could have a discussion with him, and talked to him a few times, he just didn't get this idea—it was intellectual and elitist what we were doing and Glasgow wasn't that, Glasgow was authentic, working-class, down to earth, simple, stupid, imperial—this identity, that was the struggle. Because it was an interesting working-class identity and that's where I see now the mistake we made in a certain sense, which to some extent comes up in *Variant*, but comes up through Malcolm Dickson and Street Level and things like that. I wish I'd built much more of an alliance with them at the time because exhibitions like Stephen Willats and Allan Sekula spoke much more to that tradition, which is an intelligent working-class, with a critical relationship to the working-class, and that for me was important but this is talking afterwards. At the time the alliance was CCA, Transmission, and us, absolutely, we'd go to each other's openings and things like that, it'd be very important.

MJ: OK, so we got to 1996 and there was an exhibition called *Film Culture*. This has excited me only because of the title, but I know absolutely nothing about it, so I wonder if you could introduce me to that if you can remember it?

CE: So, *Film Culture* was really that. It came out of, again, I think a lot of it is discussions with Douglas. We used to live in two apartments that were above each other, he was above me. And, so, we would spend a lot time playing pool and things like that so a lot of these discussions came out of that, I fell out with him much later but at that time we were very close—partly over politics I think. He was very much about film culture.

I remember talking also to Ross Sinclair a lot, we did an exhibition around that time also in that flat, so the flat below Douglas Gordon's where I was sharing with two other artists, one from England, one from Hungary, Beta [Veszely] and David [Wilkinson], called [*Wish You Were Here Too*, 1997]. That was also around this question of bedroom culture, so this idea that—I never really wrote about it but I wish I had—so this idea that with Ross's t-shirts and things like that, and even very early Jim Lambie before he became more well known, it was all about making work in a bedroom and this teenage bedroom idea, of this being your territory, and you can mark it out, and you can put anything on the walls, and you can paint the room. This sort of teenage bedroom thing becoming a form of making art in a way, very much part of Douglas just watching VHS tapes in that time and then playing with them and things like that. That idea of film culture and bedroom culture sort of merged a bit in my thinking and so instead of 'Bedroom Culture' which would have been a better show, we did *Film Culture*.

Film Culture was precisely about this idea of film being a reference point, rather than really making film, and this is *movies* then really, so the Hollywood tradition but wider than that. Movies were a natural environment in which you were then making work, rather like an impressionist looking at a lily pond and making a painting. For our generation it was film which was the natural environment in which you then respond and make work, so that was the idea of *Film Culture*. The culture was coming out of the film, or art was coming out of the film, so it wasn't necessarily only art that was about film, and it wasn't the subject itself as film but it was film as a background to all of our lives, from when we were born basically, in a sense having more reality, more connection with film than with the lilies in Monet's garden.

MJ: Do you remember who or what was in that?

CE: I invited an artist I'd worked with when I was in Kettle's Yard, who's a Canadian artist called Mark Lewis who I subsequently worked with on *Afterall*, which is this journal that we set up around 1999. He made films in Glasgow, so he came and actually shot films, but they were all kind of versions of films that—like endings, it was called *A Sense of the End* [1996]. And they were all endings of films that you kind of already knew. It's quite a nice film actually. So, it's a film about film in a way, it's a film about the tropes, the clichés of how films end, from the sunset and two people kissing to the drama of the station where the train pulls out and the guy is too late to get on train for the girl, to the sort of *Taggart* ending, the suspense ending, or the resolution ending. And so, you saw it on two screens, we put it in one of the smaller rooms on two screens.

Then we had a work by Pierre Bismuth which was just a soundtrack that was working on a projector, so you only had the soundtrack but you saw the projector turning. So, there was no image but there was a soundtrack generated through a very old projector which we managed to find that didn't work half the time and things like that. That was in the big space. It was kind of a version of *24 Hour Psycho* that didn't really work, a big space with a very small object in it. I can't remember who else was in it, I think there were some others, some Glasgow artists as well in it. [...]

MJ: To go back to this timeline that we're developing. When did you leave Tramway, do you remember?

CE: 1997.

MJ: So not too long after *Film Culture*.

CE: I think there was a Bruce McLean project and then we did another Stephen Willats/Allan Sekula project, the ones that really went under the radar because nobody knew where to place them, and that opened after I'd left I think. I started that and then handed it on.

MJ: You moved from Tramway, and was that to then set up The Modern Institute?

CE: So then, in my head I set up three things. Probably the one I was most proud of in some ways was Protoacademy, which we set up in Edinburgh as part of the Edinburgh College of Art. Then The Modern Institute with Toby [Webster] and Will [Bradley] in those days, and *Afterall* which was this publication that we set up in London, together with Mark Lewis. That was what I left to do and also to do Video Positive 1998, ISEA conference which was called *Revolution*.

I partly left because, I mean maybe it was just that might time was up—I wouldn't want to blame anybody for it—but I think it was also to do with this tension between the theatre and the gallery, the visual arts space, was just hard to maintain. I think Neil Wallace left before me and when Neil left there was a certain—he shielded me from a certain amount of the politics. So, what happened was the whole team got moved together with other theatre programmers into a space near George Square so I couldn't work any more out of Tramway because Bob Palmer wanted to centralise things. And then they brought in a programme chief, Neil Lavine, who is a very nice man actually but just wasn't right for me because I wanted to do my own thing and I had to argue with him about whether it's a good idea to do stuff.

I also saw these other chances to do things, so I thought at that time it felt—it's a very different time from now, it was the late 1990s and you could say, as I see it now, that the adrenalin shot of all these socialist assets coming into capitalism from 1989 to 1991 was really growing the economy and producing the inequality—and why we're here now in lockdown, the destruction of the environment and everything like that that came out of it—but at that time it was just purely financial gain and so I really felt at that, late 1990s, that there were lots of options and so freelance was a really viable choice somehow, which it was in a way. I survived from 1997 until 2000 more or less on gig economy basically, and reasonably well, I was earning more than I was at Tramway in those years because I'd got a Tate show called *Intelligence*, which was the first Tate Triennial and things like that, which I didn't know at the time but all that came and if I hadn't left that wouldn't have happened. [...]

MJ: I guess maybe if I could ask a bit about The Modern Institute and the early days of that. I don't know so much about what projects happened. I know there was a Rirkrit Tiravanija *Four Corners* thing which was related. Could you tell me a bit about how that worked, what happened, and this is all pre-commercial guise?

CE: Yeah, it is in a way. It was difficult from the beginning because I was becoming more interested, in a way, in the political and social possibilities of art and not so much in the commercial ones, I think Toby [Webster] was more interested in the commercial ones and Will [Bradley] was trying to mediate, which wasn't easy, but also had his own agenda which was slightly different, was maybe more engaged in the art-as-art somehow and in artists and care, he's a very caring person, so I think that came a lot from him. So, there was this sort of tension between this commercial and this more sort of research-oriented aspect.

So, we started, I think, by calling ourselves a production and research organisation at the beginning, so not so much a gallery. Initially we were thinking to work with artists of—it's only a couple of years but there's a slightly different generational thing between Toby and me, we did a box set with Christine Borland, I remember, which I don't think he really likes. He didn't really want to work with Christine because she was too conceptual. Then Jim Lambie, I remember, I didn't put into the Tate Triennial in 2000 because I kind of just couldn't, just found it too Pop Art. I mean I like Jim, but in the end, it didn't quite work for me. Maybe it was different tastes or maybe there was an attempt to break away from that sort of Christine, Douglas, Roddy, Jacqui, Craig Richardson group and into a new group. Richard Wright was one of the people who was very much in both and I'd talked a lot to Richard about it when it became quite tense.

But Rirkrit was a project where we managed to get some money, I think, from the arts council and also we had some money left over, because we took over another charity which Sue Brind had run and that became The Modern Institute formally, and they had some money sitting there, so we used some money from that and used some extra money to do the Rirkrit project with the four screens where people could vote for which was their favourite film in each street and then you brought them together and had a kind of festival and it was amazing, it was a lot of structure.

I have to say that I think from an early stage, and I think Toby was right, I was very much distracted by Protoacademy which I was putting a lot of energy into, and I was living here [Edinburgh] and they were in Glasgow so that was also a certain distancing. Then I remembered the people from *Frieze* who were setting up the art fair, Matthew Slotover came up at some point to Glasgow and we were talking together and I remember Toby looking me at some point after I'd said something and, 'well if that's how it is we should call ourselves The Political Institute, not The Modern Institute,' and then the guy, Matthew Slotover—we were saying we don't want to be a gallery, and Will was saying, 'no we want to be this research and production organisation but if we can use the gallery mechanisms that would be good,' and Matthew Slotover was saying, 'no, you'll either be a gallery or you won't succeed, you've only got those two options, basically, that kind of hybrid model doesn't work.' I think he was right.

I left after the first time we went to Liste in Basel. I just found it awful. It wasn't my thing and I didn't want to be a salesperson for art. I got questions like, 'is this work serious?' for Martin Boyce, who I quite like as an artist, and I was the only one who could speak German so I had to do quite a lot of the talking when there were German collectors, and he was saying 'is this serious?' in German and I was going, 'yeah, the artist is really pursuing this relationship to Eames and to modernism and decorative modernism in a very substantive way,' trying to explain to him and he was looking at me puzzled, I was going, 'maybe I don't understand him, maybe my German's not good enough.' Then, he lowers his chin down and says, 'is this serious?' and I said, 'what do you mean?' And he said, 'how much money can I sell it for afterwards?' Is it a serious *investment*? I was thinking 'is this serious,' like, 'is he a proper artist' but he just meant 'are you serious that if I buy it now I can sell it for more later?' It was slightly my misunderstanding the German but it was also just that I couldn't conceptualise that that would be the conversation you have around art. I just looked at him and said, 'I don't know, I have no idea' and he walked off. Toby looked at me through body language to say 'what the fuck did you do?' and I'm going, 'that's what he said,' and he said 'you have to say well of course you're going to make lots more money, you have to be really

confident and just say it.' I said, 'but I don't want to do that, I don't know if it's going to make lots more money, I'm just deceiving the guy.'

We sort of fell out more or less around that and then I took a distance from it and got on with Protoacademy. Now looking back, I think it was a tension that was unresolvable, it had to go, in a way he was right, it had to become a more sort of academic, political field like Protoacademy did to some extent or it had to become a gallery, the tension was too great between them. And it became a gallery because Toby was more dedicated and more committed to it, and I pulled back very readily in a way, that was kind of enough for me.

MJ: And what year would that have been when you left?

CE: I think we set it up in 1998 and already by 1999, I was semi-detached, by the time 2000 came around and I got the job in Sweden I was already gone. Then Will was involved for longer, I was still in touch with Will but I wasn't really talking to Toby at that point. Then Will left to Oslo at a certain point and then it was Toby's baby. The Common Guild came a little bit out of some of that ambition. Will set up as an attempt to rescue some of those more public values, rather than private values, then Katrina [Brown] took over later on and built it into what it was and really shaped it, but Will was there at the beginning of The Common Guild, it was his idea, the name was his.

MJ: If we reach 2000, is that the conclusion of your activity in Scotland?

CE: Protoacademy went on until about 2000, so we did some activities in the early 2000s but more or less, yes, sort of directly. I did a show, but that was probably also in the 1990s, in Stills Gallery, called *Sign of the Times*, which had David Shrigley in it and a few others, even Tracey Emin actually. The more or less it became a family base and I was working elsewhere and started to get invitations to biennials like in Korea and place like that which then took me away at that point.

MJ: That's probably a good place to stop this professional chronology, thank you so much for covering that. I'm conscious of time and don't want to keep you too long so maybe if I could ask just a couple of these more pointed questions, more in relation to your position as somebody who was an audience member or just somebody who was around. [...] Have you seen nationhood played out in the content or presentation of work in Scotland? Do you think there's a Scottishness?

CE: We talked a little bit about that, I think, as Douglas with his Jekyll and Hyde and the James Hogg, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and things like that are all sort of pointing to, there's always this doubleness. There's always this, within that Clydeside, there's this acceptance of the imperial status of being a secondary subject within an empire and an assertion of a local identity, these two go hand in hand in that time. I think that any kind of form of Scottishness in the work is in danger of falling into that dead end, which is to marry a British imperialism with a tartan and shortbread. And I think particularly as Britain has shrunk, that has become less and less of a viable option. That's kind of where Scottishness in that sense lies.

I think what I would say is there was an internationalism that was grounded here and I don't know if that's Scottishness or not but I think it's interesting. I think it's grounded here in the sense that it wants to do something for the people that are here, for the artists that are here, for the communities that are here, but also to be able to say you can be here and you can be

part of the world, you don't have to be here and only be part of Britain, because Scottishness is only an internal identity, it's never an external identity because Britain doesn't allow it to be an external identity but also Scottishness doesn't allow itself to be an external identity. It's always in relation to Britishness or Englishness or whatever.

So I think that that idea of nationhood is a class schtick, because the moment you express Scottishness you end up going back to Britishness, the way out of it is a kind of internationalism which just happens to be here but allows people who are here to come together under certain historical and cultural commonalities but the work, if you see it from Christine or Douglas, or Jim Lambie or Richard Wright, it's not really engaged in that idea of a British-Scottishness and I think it's hard to have a Scottishness without Britishness and that's the problem. I'm very anti-British, so I have to, in a way, be anti-Scottish because that's where Scotland placed itself—I'd love Scotland to be an international country and just get on with it, but it's not because of this relation to this imperial past which it's both victim and perpetrator, it's both/and, it's like Turkey. I have a lot of friends in Turkey and we often describe the same relationship of being both part of an empire but also being a victim of colonialism, you're both/and.

MJ: So, thinking about the duration of your professional involvement in artists' moving image or whatever you want to call it, so maybe the period of 1993 to 2000, what changes might you be able to observe in that period?

CE: I think absolutely the integration of moving image media art into the overall art canon. By 2000, that was really complete. I really think in 1993, and I think *V-Topia* is a good example of that, that it was still in this media art ghetto, and that's a word we used to use at the time, I can remember. There was this space set aside where this stuff happened, that was to do with the burgeoning of the Internet, technology—what looks incredibly primitive technology now but we thought was like the high end—and film, maybe. Maybe the idea of *Film Culture* was to already start to relate it to a wider circuit than just this media art space, because the media art space wasn't really related either to film in the movie sense of the word, nor the sort of auteur production from Godard and Fellini and people like that, nor was it connected to art in its wider capacity in the 1990s.

I think by the end of 2000 it had been fully integrated and absorbed. Of course, there are things that are lost in that process, but I think you see the fact that, just like photography, a photo gallery or FACT, in a way, they don't really make sense any more in that why would you focus on those media? Now we're twenty years on from that point but I think already in 2000 there was a question. I remember having discussions with Eddie Berg about it, that there was a real discussion about why would you want to be in this ghetto when there's a big world out there. Isn't framing it around creative technology—[Foundation for] Art and Creative Technology, that was the name, I was part of the brainstorm to try and come up with the name, the other was LEAF, I remember which was Liverpool Electronic Arts Foundation, or something—so it was like electronic arts or creative technology or it was always related to this technological base: why would you want to restrict yourself to that technological place? Why couldn't you, in those institutions, if there was an interesting relationship to the contemporary world—which is a technological experience—why couldn't you show a painting that did that? Why couldn't you show a sculpture that did that? Why couldn't you show photography that did that? And not specify it as a medium.

By 2000 it felt like that argument was a bit over, there were still people who were fighting for it and saying, 'this is a political statement and there should be endless editions and film

should be free and you can just send VHS to people' or whatever. There wasn't really streaming or anything like that at that point but that was already in people's thinking, that that might happen but that was an increasingly separate context I think.

I think within Scotland it felt like that was—I mean when was the moment when you could really say that was integrated? [*Here + Now*, Dundee Contemporary Arts, 2001] which was quite an important exhibition that Katrina did when she was in Dundee. There was one when Nicola was in CCA [*New Art in Scotland*, 1994] and then there was another one that Katrina did, I can't quite remember when, but those were moments when that integration was apparent. Nobody would now question—even in GoMA if you like, I mean now it's a very different thing from Spalding's era but at that point Spalding I don't think would have had a film or a video work in his GoMA, I think he would see that that was art and this media art was something else.

MJ: So, in this kind of construction of a history of artists' moving image in Scotland, is there a single key event that you might pick out which seems important or pivotal?

CE: Gosh. That would sort of allow that shaping? You know, I'm trying to think beyond the Tramway now which is difficult. I do think the clash that *Trust* represented was a kind of clash of different interests and I think one of them was that moment where it hadn't yet been established but it was in the process of establishing work like Tony Oursler or Stan Douglas within an art context without any question and people resisting that. There was the political resistance of Clydesidism versus [internationalism]—but there was also this thing about painting versus the new media if you like, that did bring to a head those clashes I think. I suppose it's difficult to separate out the question of the medium from the question of the politics. When I say internationalism, putting a positive spin on it, but also a sort of disinterest in a broader public, really a focus on the artworld which I think was a negative thing but that was the split that was happening and was also, to some extent, represented in media.

Media was representing a sort of internationalising future that was certainly less Scottish in that class schtick of Scottish-Britishness, but also was looking to take Scotland as just another country among others into the world. It's hard but we've talked so much about that now that if we talked about CCA or Transmission—maybe the Stan Douglas exhibition at Transmission was important as sort recognising some of that. It depends what you mean by important because there's an importance to the artworld which I think is quite separate from a public importance. I think going up to 2000, I guess also there was a kind of opening up at a certain point even of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in the later 1990s and 2000s, to Scottish art from that generation. I think that then naturally included media art, that felt quite an important moment.

MJ: Could you guess a year for that?

CE: I'd need to look at the programme of SNGMA and find out what was the point where—I can't remember a show as such, I more remember discussions towards it with people like Douglas being recognised. It's difficult to see it. [...] Maybe, if you want to go really to the core of it, maybe *24 Hour Psycho* in Kunst-Werke was an important one because that was really what we wanted to achieve, that felt like a real achievement.

MJ: In exporting?

CE: Yeah, I think that was important. [...] Douglas was sort of leading on that but I think he was also bringing other artists with him. I remember we did an exhibition in Switzerland, in Kunsthalle Bern, that was a group of Glasgow artists and I think was called *Glasgow-Kunsthalle Bern* [1997], I've got the catalogue somewhere here behind me actually. Those exhibitions I think were quite important. Maybe that was the most important thing: to get the recognition of a kind of media practice into the international field. For me, anyway, certainly for me personally because that allowed me to get the jobs that I did afterwards in a way. I think it would have been hard for a Scottish-based curator in the generation before to be recognised at all outwith Britain.

MJ: I'd like to touch on two more things before we round up. This is just something we've omitted to talk about so far and it's to do with resource, and when I say resource I kind of mean money: do you have any recollection of what was available to artists working with moving image whilst you were working here?

CE: There was a lot of commissioning going on and we were using the budgets—I can't really remember the budgets, but I probably have them somewhere—maybe we had £100,000 a year or something for the programme and we used quite a lot of that to commission. So, Christine, Douglas, Roddy, Jonathan Monk, Jacqui, David Shrigley, when we did this collaboration, John Shankie. [...] All of those were commissions and all of those were using the budget that we had to commission. Richard Wright as well, I remember. We won a prize, so we had like £25,000 which was a quarter of our budget. We got a surprise from Beck's or something like that, so that went into commissioning, also international artists. I think that was it really.

The budgets that we had available were those and then you could try and apply for some money from the arts council but it was quite limited because Tramway was funded anyway by the arts council so it wasn't—it was the Scottish Arts Council in those days not Creative Scotland—and you could get some money. There was also a Scottish Arts Council collection at that point and so that was useful in getting money to artists because you could apply. I was on the committee once and I was trying to get them to buy Richard Wright but they wouldn't buy it because it was temporary. So, there were lots of things that came out of it I suppose in that way. It was largely Scottish Arts Council and then if we could make any money through prizes and sponsorship—though that was mostly things like beer and things like that you get for the opening, sometimes we got a little bit of money for that I think—and we also applied for bits of money. But it was mostly money from the Scottish Arts Council and from Glasgow City Council. That gave you a basic amount that you tried to spend and then you could earn money through touring for instance, you could ask for a bit of a fee for some of the tours that we did. We earned a bit of money from that exhibition in Switzerland for instance. Those were going into the production. But we tried to use the base budget as much as we could for support, and also something like *Trust*, where the artists became curators was also a form of support but I don't know where else they got their money from really.

They started to have galleries. I think Douglas started to work with Lisson Gallery at a certain point quite early on and I think Christine as well, and so they started to sell some work and that brought money in. That was, in a way, an impetus for The Modern Institute, for Toby to say there's a market here, he was right, there was one—not a market in Scotland but for the artists we were working with.

D. Barry Esson and Bryony McIntyre

Marcus Jack: Maybe if we could start by talking about both of your educational situations and how you came to work together?

Barry Esson: I went to Edinburgh University and I've got a Civil Engineering degree. I didn't go to art school but whilst at university I mostly worked, in the summer, at the Fringe and then Grid Iron Theatre Company, which is a regular funding organisation now, they do site-specific theatre. So, I was involved in theatre, specifically site-specific theatre through university a little bit and then on the back of that, when I came out of university, I worked for Grid Iron and got a job at The Arches in Glasgow. I was the project coordinator for their refurbishment, so in 1999/2000/2001 they had a £4.5 million refurbishment, a lottery-funded refurbishment project. Half of my job was supposed to be to research future artistic policy when they had all this extra space, because they were redeveloping the basement and the top two arches which hadn't been used before, and the other half of my job was supposed to be helping with the management of the actual building works. But, when I started they were half a million pounds over budget and six months behind schedule and all of my job was just managing the refurbishment, which is weird because I'd got a 2:2 in Civil Engineering—I hadn't even got a good engineering degree. So, I worked there for a bit and then whilst I was working there the music programmer got offered—there used to be a thing called CMN, Contemporary Music Network, which actually funded our Kill Your Timid Notion tour that we did in 2008

Bryony McIntyre: It was like an offshoot of Arts Council England, one of their project things to get things touring.

BE: Yeah, you could get large grants from them to do a UK-wide tour and LMC, London Musicians' Collective, which had long historic links with LUX and the Film-Makers' Co-op in the 1970s, they both started at the same time. They had a tour which got offered to The Arches, called *Japanorama*, which had loads of people from the Onkyo scene in Japan that I was really into like Otomo Yoshihide, Sachiko M, a bunch of people, Toshimaru Nakamura, like a really great line-up and they turned it down because it was going to cost them like a thousand pounds or something. I was like, 'are you crazy? That's such an amazing thing,' so me and one of the duty managers kicked up a fuss about it and eventually convinced them to give us the venue for one night and that was the first Instal. We were so disappointed that they hadn't booked this one thing. They gave us like £2k or something and we raised like five from PRS.

BM: Yeah, you got some PRS money and some Japan money.

BE: Maybe some money from Japan and the Japan Foundation, back when you could get money from the Japan Foundation or the PRS having never done anything before. So, we did that once and then another time, and then the way that KYTN started, from my perspective—Faith Liddell, who I had known from working at the fringe and the Famous Grouse House, was director of the DCA and came to the first Instal, and she really loved it and wanted to programme something that responded to DCA's programme but was kind of similar. She wanted to try and do that in 2002, and we applied for some money but we didn't get it, and then she worked a bit more on the budget and then we got money to do it in 2003. The budget was like £20k.

BM: 2002? Depends who you ask. Depends what you classify as partnership.

BE: And, you had a stronger film background. I came from an experimental music background, that's what I was like really interested in.

BM: Yeah, your core interests were much more towards experimental music, sound art, musique concrète, at the time. My educational background is that I went to Sheffield Hallam to do a film course, from 1997 sort of time. At that time, there weren't actually that many film course or courses that spoke to film theory with a practical element. There was Glasgow but it was really film and TV based, there was University of Westminster but it was really vocational and photographic, there was somewhere in Sussex. There just weren't a lot of places, and it's what I really wanted to do so I ended up at Sheffield Hallam on a film and photography course, so it had a practical element. That was my academic interest at that time, learning about film theory, going through old issues of Screen, lots of 1970s feminist stuff, that was really great but not a lot of particular stuff about what we would now call artists' film and video, really. When it came to the opportunity for us to collaborate more fully on something together, then that was something where we thought, 'what if we bring both of our interests together and investigate the space of what we can do in terms of making a live festival out of that,' particularly with a motivation—and this is pre- any kind of streaming on the internet, if you wanted to see a film you literally had to book a print and ship.

BE: Or watch it on UbuWeb, but there's a politics around that.

BM: That was pre-UbuWeb as well, to be honest. Like when I was first programming for KYTN it would be literally VHS. You'd have to request a VHS in the post.

BE: Or you'd get the train down to LUX.

BM: And literally sit at the LUX for a couple of days and watch loads of stuff.

BE: Through Instal we did a tour in America and I remember we spent days in EAI and the Film-Makers' Co-op.

BM: And that was the only way to see stuff. I think there was definitely a motivation of like that—you know when you first come to an artform and you have a joy and a wonder and a curiosity about it, you're going to go, 'holy shit, what is that? It's amazing. We have to share this with other people.' The possibility of sharing at that time, there was no online capacity for that, you had to be there in person and do the thing. A festival was the exhibition method, that was the only outlet that we could see. I guess, in retrospect, now thinking about it, because neither of us were coming from a visual arts perspective, neither of us thought to put on an exhibition. Weirdly, thinking about it now, even though we did get access to DCA and their big gallery, there was definitely still a class hierarchy between what we were allowed to do and what the visual art curators were allowed to do, and what was deemed as good art and what was deemed as something that they do as, not a throwaway exactly because they did commit to it, but there were definitely conversations with the curatorial team at DCA about their reticence about what we were doing in their space, a kind of territorialism to an extent, which was something we had to navigate.

BE: And that would have been Katrina Brown at that time, she's now The Common Guild. We got on pretty well with Katrina but at the time in the early 2000's she maybe had a different idea about what artists' was—at the time no one even called it artists' moving

image—it was ‘experimental film.’ Part of it becoming legitimate to the visual art world was it getting called artists’ film and video or artist’ moving image or something.

BM: And you’ll probably know better than us, but that seemed to be a strategy employed by Ben Cook and LUX and some of the academic folk, Mark Webber, to make a space of legitimacy for that work.

BE: And Stuart [Comer] at the Tate.

BM: Make a space of legitimacy in the UK, because obviously other countries—America, Germany, Oberhausen, whatever—would take this work seriously. It felt like it wasn’t taken particularly seriously and most people hadn’t seen any of this stuff and to be honest, neither had I in some cases.

BE: Yeah, we’d programme things to see them.

BM: Yeah, that would be the motivation in the same way with the music festivals. How are you going to see or even hear, you just have to get them to come to Glasgow, that’s the only option, there’s no other way to do it. So, that was the main motivation—a sort of live research practice: let’s see what this is, let’s watch this together, where do we go next from this? I think that if you look back at the programming of KYTN, there is quite a lot of interest in and lifting up of what now would be deemed classic works of both experimental film and expanded cinema. At the time it was just about trying to see that work, especially expanded cinema. There wasn’t even documentation of that older stuff. Like there was no documentation of the Lis Rhodes stuff. You go to LUX, look at the tin, you try and imagine it, that’s it.

BE: Mark Webber had done that thing in Dortmund or Dusseldorf.

BM: Oh yeah, a couple of times.

BE: Maybe just once?

BM: I think there was two iterations.

BE: 2002, 2003 maybe.

BM: Possibly. So, there was definitely a crossover in interests between what Mark Webber was programming and the ‘oh hang on, there’s a possibility we could bring this to Scotland. Show this to Scottish audiences and experience it for ourselves.’ Which felt really important at the time because there just wasn’t anything.

MJ: I wanted to ask about precedence. Was there anything else you were seeing in Scotland, was anyone else doing this sort of work?

BE: I think Bryony’s thing about it being like a research practice for us is quite accurate. When I did the first Instal I was like twenty-four or something and so when we did the first KYTN we were like twenty-six, so still pretty young and hadn’t been to art school or anything. There was a naivety about it. In the same way that hearing about things that you hadn’t seen is a really big deal, or was a really big deal for me and my generation—like there’s a great story about the Japanese band Hijokaidan, I asked them how they got into noise music, they used to be in Japan in the 1970s and they’d read reviews of Led Zeppelin

but they couldn't hear the records so they'd try and make music like what they felt the reviews sounded like, and hear Led Zeppelin years later and go, 'what the fuck is this?' So, yeah, there was something about researching on the job. I think when we started out we were coming from a limited set of knowledge and trying to creatively respond to what DCA was interested in or what DCA said they did, and then to try—we're interested in social spaces and experiencing things together, rather than, I don't like exhibitions particularly where it's kind of like false democracy of the exhibition where everybody gets to choose what they do on their own and they all get to move around in individuated units. I like to experience things together so that maybe led to this proclivity for expanded cinema, things that only happen live.

BM: That also maybe materially responded to the situation that was available to us. So, it was a site-specific curation practice, because what do you do in DCA 1? It was sort of responsive in that way. In terms of precedence, I think there was an interesting moment for us where we went to—I think the first ever conference we went to—I was like, 'oh my God, what are conferences? They're really boring, just people reading out papers.' Duncan White organised it at the Tate, we've got the poster in the bathroom.

BE: The Live Record?

BM: The Live Record, and it was one of the beginnings of the documentation or the collation of the history, that beginning moved into artists' film and video. Duncan had researched this poster, with lots of connections on it. [...] It's got this map of what happens where and what happened next and we're down at the bottom, off festivals and events.

BE: It basically just says, 'and other things' or something like that.

BM: It mentions Metamkine and [La] Cellule d'Intervention. I think it mentions Karen and Brad [Mirza & Butler]. And then Kill Your Timid Notion. So, in terms of the research we did at the time or had the capacity for, was just to research what we were going to put on next and wasn't really about thinking about the place of what we were doing. I think to answer the question is: I don't know what precedence there was for it, in Scotland.

*BE: The things that were influential on me were things like hearing about the *International Symposium on Shadows* in London, or hearing about the stuff that Mark Webber had done in Dortmund, or just meeting Metamkine and speaking with them about their understanding of the history of expanded cinema, and then probably also just striking up a friendship with Mike and Ben at LUX, and being able to access that knowledge. We were just coming to it quite fresh and learning on the job, I think.*

MJ: I wonder if I could ask more about the relationship to DCA. Were you doing this as an independent, autonomous body or was it integrated in a structural way?

BM: I guess a mixture because it started differently. To answer that question briefly, then maybe you can go into the detail, so we formed Arika as a company in 2006, so before that period we would often act as freelance curators that would be hired by the venue to put on a programme. We would often do the fundraising for that project but any monies went through the partner organisation and it ostensibly looked like it was their project. From a producer, creative producer, organiser point of view, what we wanted to do to be able to continue this work and have a more sustainable future, was to make it look like the work was autonomously ours. So, in 2006 that's why we formed Arika so that any funds we got for

particular projects could come through Arika, so basically it was a co-production relationship with the partner organisation as opposed to being 'employed.' But, did we even get paid as freelance curators? I'm not even sure. It was always mostly, in general, a negotiation with the venue to access some of their programme funds basically, in those first instances. So, that would have been for the first two or three KYTNs. Latterly, it would have been Arika fundraising externally to bring a project or co-production to the venue. In retrospect that shift did have some material impacts on our relationship at the venue. There was also a handover. Faith Liddell left and Clive Gillman started.

BE: Maybe in 2006? He was very supportive of us starting Arika

BM: He was very happy for us to continue the work, so there was risk. It was very much like, Faith in particular—because again, we weren't necessarily recruited through the curator lineage, just through the directorship—so there was definitely a risk when Clive took over of that director going, 'what is this? Not bothered.'

BE: But Clive is an experimental filmmaker from the 1980s.

BM: So, he was up for it.

BE: A couple of things. To go back to what Bryony was talking about just briefly in case it doesn't come up, about the Live Record and what you were saying about there being a London-centric focus. There was definitely like a marginalisation, and people wouldn't come from London up to Dundee unless we paid their train fare. So, there was definitely a marginalisation, feeling a little hard done-by by a London-centric exhibition focus where the Tate would put on a one-day—they'd screen a Morgan Fisher film and they'd be, 'fucking hell, amazing,' and we'd have Morgan Fisher be there for a week and do his whole retrospective. So, there was definitely a feeling of marginalisation from that narrative that gets written.

In terms of working with DCA, the things that stick out for me are that maybe the first Kill Your Timid Notion might have cost £20k and the last one cost £120k in cash terms and that's like a big change over six or seven editions of a festival. That maybe speaks to how Bryony talked about us being invited in initially through Faith at DCA, and any of the money—DCA would put in like one or two thousand pounds of their programme money and we would raise the rest. That's why it didn't happen in 2002, because we tried to raise money from the arts council and it didn't work, and then the next year maybe we got like £18k or £15k to do the project at DCA. So, all of these were framed as DCA projects which we were external curators or producers for. We would write the applications or the artistic content of the applications, do the budgets, but we're still learning on the job because we're like twenty-five or something. One thing to reflect on is that we came up at a particular time in the funding structure in Scotland, and even though at the time people were bemoaning how impoverished it was compared to ten or twenty years prior to that, it was much more affluent than the funding environment now.

BM: By an order of magnitude. I mean, obviously we think about this not on a daily basis but semi-regularly in terms of the factors that have allowed us to work, and do our work. I think the fact that the relationships we built with the artists and DCA came basically just after the millennium, so weirdly there was still millennium money sloshing around. We managed to establish a festival—both Instal and Kill Your Timid Notion—for several editions before the impacts of the 2008 economic crisis hit, more in 2009/2010 by the time it had trickled

through government and through the arts councils. So, we were lucky enough to come up at a time when some of these venues were willing to take risks on new people that didn't really have a track record. And, we were able to establish ourselves enough before the shit hit the fan. We recognise that that serendipity or luck, or there's a bunch of stuff happening there which we're not necessarily in control of.

BE: Yeah, but to go back to your question about how we worked with venues, then definitely doing Kill Your Timid Notion massively relied on a good relationship, especially with Faith and Clive. Then, before we were Arika, when we were freelance producers or curators or something, I don't remember being paid for the first maybe four Kill Your Timid Notions. As we started to get paid, as we built the festivals up, you're still not getting paid anything like what it would cost in terms of your labour. We got Flexible Funding which was a precursor to Regular Funding. We got that in 2009, so we were only starting to get something that looked like a salary in 2009.

BM: Reflecting on the DCA relationship, at the time it was departmentally organised so we were given access to the building and the programme via our relationship with the directors, then we circumvented the curatorial department mostly, certainly in the first few editions. We worked with the people who did the installation and gallery management work, we worked with the marketing department and then we had to work quite specifically with the film and cinema exhibition department. So, there was a whole set of quite interesting—probably not boring for you but definitely boring for other people—set of negotiations around space, what was allowed, certification issues etc. Because DCA at the time, and still pretty much, is a repertory cinema, they have their targets, they wanted to have popular films on like Madagascar or Gosford Park, alongside their more arthouse programming. They weren't necessarily really interested in giving over too much space or prime slots to things that weren't going to generate some income. There was, as always, which seems to be a lot of our work, negotiation with the venue about use of space that isn't necessarily based on economics or any logic around audience numbers or anything like that.

BE: I would also say that it relied on good relationships with the directors but also a lot of the staff. DCA is not set up as an events production venue so they don't have an infrastructure to do that, so every time you wanted to do something that was happening in the gallery as a performance, that's kind of different to what the gallery installation crew would be used to or the technical crew would be used to. If you wanted to have a festival where there were hundreds of people turning up each day and they were ticketed in a way which wasn't just paying £6.50 per film screening, or something—

BM: It meant that hosting KYTN was different for the box office, it was different for the marketing from their normal day-to-day process or operations. There was a lot of taking those people and those departments with us and after the fact, quite a lot of realisation of the extraordinary labour that those kinds of events required, particularly in a venue that wasn't used to putting them on.

BE: Which is like, DCA would say that their staff were massively overworked on those things because they would rack up loads of TOIL, or loads of extra time. So, their in-kind support was actually pretty large. It was a large amount of in-kind support to make those festivals happen and that led to tensions. Once we'd professionalised, or we'd become Arika and we were starting to raise more money, DCA maybe wasn't necessarily capable of hosting a £120,000 festival every year, because all of their box office staff, because of the sort of contracts they had, they'd have four weeks of TOIL to take back. I think we kind of wore

them out a bit and there were some frayed nerves around how much in-kind it took from DCA and then also the stepping on toes as to whether expanded cinema or structural film was considered art by the curatorial staff.

BM: Because for a couple of the editions, in Gallery Two—the little one—we did a kind of ‘exhibition’ which was like doing a full install but just for something that was for four days, because it wasn’t allowed to extend into their normal exhibition programme.

BE: They had things they wanted to do as well, it’s their space and we don’t have a right to it.

BM: But, what it did for DCA, which I think was, from the directorial perspective, what they wanted to do, was activate the galleries and get the space used in a really different way. Get a totally different audience in, bring a different energy to the building, and to Dundee’s perception of what DCA was, because it was really different to their standard exhibitions programming. The events were really busy and people really responded to it. We still get messages occasionally, that are like, ‘I loved KYTN, you should do it again,’ and things like that. There wasn’t—if we’re talking about what was happening in Scotland at the time, and then what was happening in Dundee at the time—it definitely was bringing something quite special outside of the central belt, which more normally you’d see in Glasgow.

BE: I want to just stress that it wouldn’t have happened at all without DCA, and it wouldn’t have happened at all without the effort of their staff. I think that maybe we did wear them down a bit over time and it did lead to tensions but they were really incredibly supportive, especially Clive and Faith and some other people who were involved.

BM: From a staff perspective everyone, although exhausted by it, was really bought into it. It was a different thing that was happening each year and so it was a different way, as art workers, that they were being asked to engage with their labour and do different things. A lot of those people did appreciate that because it made it really different from their day-to-day stuff. I don’t think we’d schedule it like this now, the programme, but we were doing half an hour, twenty-minute turnarounds from one event to the next sometimes from a blackout space to full light, you know, so a lot of production and tech heavy festival work.

MJ: So, you said you were able to start deriving a salary in about 2009, before that, how were you able to sustain your own work? How were you living off of this?

BM: I was working full time. 2003–2007 I was working at Scottish Screen, so I was their short film distribution officer until they stopped doing short film distribution, basically, and I got fed up with being part of a quango that wasn’t actively engaged in supporting artists. We were doing a lot of—again, at the time it was all VHS, when I started it was compilation VHS tapes, I was the one who was like, ‘guys, I think we should do a compilation DVD this year,’ and people were like, ‘holy shit, is that even possible.’ So, we were supporting artists who had had their films funded by Scottish Screen to submit them to all the festivals, I did all the distribution of the prints, tapes, just to take that labour away from the artists so they could concentrate on doing more art. That’s what my job was, but Scottish Screen decided that that wasn’t a priority anymore and it started going more strategic, that’s when—when did the merger happen, 2011 or something—it was the beginning of a set of restructures at Scottish Screen which ultimately led to making the merger with the Scottish Arts Council into Creative Scotland possible.

BE: It wasn’t a nice environment for you either.

BM: Not particularly. And you were working full time.

BE: I also just wanted to say that it's important to recognise that whilst we were doing KYTN there was the REWIND project at Duncan of Jordanstone, especially—I mean Steve Partridge, we knew a bit and got on with, but Adam Lockhart was really great and it was great that he was there. So, there was obviously that connection and they fed in, and also, actually Zoe Irving at Duncan of Jordanstone, that was an important connection because she would organise like a salon of academic papers, maybe on the Friday afternoon and then we would get their students involved in various different things. That was also an important connection.

In terms of what I would do to pay the bills, I worked as like a project manager for an architectural building developer, having done The Arches. After I did The Arches, I worked for the British Council and I did project management on moving the British Council in Edinburgh from one office to another, then I got another job with them where I refurbished their offices—I was the project coordinator for their offices in Hong Kong getting refurbished. Then, came back here and the building that we'd moved the British Council into, the developers that owned that offered me a job to oversee some of the developments that they'd worked on, like liaising with contractors and architects and stuff. I tried to do this as a day job, to subsidise the events we were working on. We were sometimes doing three festivals a year.

BM: And so, we both started doing Arika stuff full time in the beginning of 2007. I think combined from all the events we did in 2007, what were our salaries that year? I think, weirdly, pay disparity, I'm not quite sure, I think you got £7k and I got £5k.

BE: I think it was the other way around.

BM: Either way.

BE: That's not that great because that year we would have done Instal, Kill Your Timid Notion, and Music Lovers' Field Companion at the Sage. In 2007 we also did, or in 2006 we did two national tours, so we might have had four or five projects that year, all relatively large. I guess we weren't motivated by getting a salary to start with, we were always wanting to build things up.

MJ: I wonder if you could walk me through some programme highlights, anecdotes or parts of Kill Your Timid Notion that you really remember?

BM: I think there was a moment when we did the Lis Rhodes Light Music piece, which because of the way that the fog—you require fog—it does totally transform the space. So, that opened up us to see that it was possible to then do things like Line Describing a Cone and to do Light Trap with Greg Pope. I think, it also built a confidence with being able to work with the projectionists because at that point we're doing 16mm stuff, we're doing hired stuff, some of it is archival, we needed the labour of some skilled projectionists. Maybe one thing we should always bring it back to is that the head projectionist at DCA, who was called Terry—can't remember his second name—he was like an old 1950s mod character, he was great, and his underling at the time, who I now think is chief projectionist at the DCA, he's called Ian Banks. What Terry and Ian both brought to the collaboration again was that fact of DCA staff getting asked to do something different and actually for Terry and Ian, when you meet old school projectionists, it's a passion, they absolutely love it. So, the fact we could speak to

Terry and go, 'we're going to have to hire these projectors'—and we'd both worked at the Edinburgh Film Festival for quite a few years, so I got quite a bit of my exhibition knowledge and experience from that, so we were able to speak to David Lester and hire some 16mm—we knew what we were hiring—but if we were ever stuck, Terry would be like, 'don't worry about it, I've got that in the garage,' or when we did [L'Anticoncept by Gil J Wolman] it was a 35mm print from the Pompidou. We were like, 'shit, we have to do it in the Gallery, how are we going to do this?'

BE: For two projectors.

BM: And Terry was like, 'don't worry I've got two mobile Chinese ex-military 35mm projectors, I'd love to get them set up again and see if we can get them going.'

BE: They were chain-driven.

BM: They sounded amazing. It so added to the whole thing. So, they were both on for Lis Rhodes, I've got pictures of them just—you know how projectionists often want to be with and tend, and just make sure, they're both sort of the ground kneeling, just making sure that everything is all going really smoothly. They brought a lot to that collaboration. Their work is usually invisibilised by its very nature but we couldn't have done it—especially the programmes in the cinema, for example. We were asking a lot of their time.

BE: Yeah, if you had six short film programmes in a day and they were on all formats.

BM: We had to have quite specific negotiations about which ones would go when because of ratio changes and exhibitions standards.

BE: Some of them were on multiple screens, or some of them need incense after three minutes and forty-two seconds, or whatever.

BM: Yeah, so it was a lot of care and labour that went into that relationship. Which, thinking about it, allowed more things to happen than if there had been a different set of projectionists or not projectionists at all. If DCA had just been a visual arts gallery and not had an in-house cinema team, we wouldn't have done it, it wouldn't have worked at all.

BE: Or David Lester would have had to have moved to Dundee for two weeks a year.

BM: So that little triptych of the expanded cinema pieces that used fog and mist, one was just like, OK, it's a double screen work, there's no artist in attendance, that worked, the second was Line Describing a Cone. What we always wanted to do in the live environment was to go, 'OK, what would make this extra? What would make this different? Is there a collaboration that we can put in place?' That's why that ended up being a collaboration with Sachiko M, which again, collaborations take a lot of negotiation, especially if they've never happened before. That worked super well. We actually did two, we did two of Line Describing a Cone, one went halfway through and then the second started so there was a point where both Cones were happening at the same time, just at different points in the Description and then the last one of—

BE: But Sachiko specifically has a spatiality to sound. So, it changes as you move your head in the space. That was a nice collaboration, it was conceptually really nice and experientially really nice.

BM: Yeah, and it got people to—what we were also interested in was thinking about audience dynamics and how people encounter space and what do they do when they're encountering a new space that they're unfamiliar with and how to navigate it and be in it, where to sit, where to stand, where to move. All of those pieces really worked with the audience and then Greg Pope's collaboration, so that was Andrew Lampert, Xavier Quérel, Christophe Auger, and Greg, with each of them in one of the corners, doing their special set-up to be able to disintegrate the film through the piece and then Jérôme Noetinger doing the sound. It was great.

BE: I might have a different view on it now, I haven't looked back on those things for a long time, I think I'm aware of the programme getting more rigorous and more concept-heavy over the years, getting harder. A lot of it to start out with was quite accessible and then later on it's just like OK, there's fucking four hours of structuralist cinema, it's quite aggressive. I think our programming later on say 2009 and 2010 across that and Instal was getting more pissed off and aggressive with limitations of being stuck within particular art forms. We naively maybe thought that, when we first started out, that those art forms were maybe inherently political, because there's still a lot that goes around that, there's a lot of lazy thinking that goes around—especially in experimental music. We were getting more and more frustrated with those formal constraints. The festivals were getting more and more arsey, more and more Marxist, more concept driven and more involved in performance art I guess, it wasn't really called that then so much. That also precipitated the break at the end, both the last KYTN and the last Instal, finally being frustrated enough not to want to keep doing those things and to take a break and try and imagine something different. Having said that, if I were to look back I might also be less frustrated with some of those formal things than I was at the time. Yeah, we were lucky to work with—I don't know, I have a soft spot for old artists, I very much like things that have already been written about but that you've not been able to experience, in a way, so that being able to go into things having already thought about them but not experienced them I like a lot.

BM: I think another effect of that bringing people together for collaborations that they wouldn't have necessarily done before, when thinking about Ken Jacobs, it was quite a big job to get Ken to come.

BE: I've got a good anecdote about that.

BM: There's loads of great Ken Jacobs anecdotes. It was a really big deal, he wasn't doing much. It wasn't something that he was really very confident about doing, especially not travelling too much. You might remember the specifics a bit more.

BM: So, the fact that we even got him to collaborate with Eric La Casa, he was like, 'what is this? I'm not sure,' and it worked really well and I think that has then given him the confidence to go into that collaborative relationship with Aki Onda. He didn't necessarily go into a collaborative relationship with Eric La Casa, but it set up the building blocks for the possibility of collaboration that might be productive for them. Another thing that I've been reflecting on, just before you get into your anecdotes.

BE: I'm just racking up the Ken ones to try and rank them as to which ones to go with.

BM: Was to do with Metamkine. We'd had managed to see their performance. We ended up in Vienna, which was maybe the first time we'd gone anywhere to see anything, to do anything.

BE: There was a two-day festival. What are they called, the distributor in Vienna?

BM: Sixpack.

BE: It was maybe a Sixpack festival or they were involved somehow. It was like a live thing, in a room in the Vienna concert house.

BM: And Metamkine performed. Anyway, so we'd seen Metamkine, and were like, yes, Metamkine, definitely, we want you all to come to Scotland. So, they came the first time, the performance was amazing, they drove over from Grenoble, a two-day drive with all their kit because there's no way to hire all their 16mm projectors, they're all kind of pre-prepared and that's their instruments—and bring their French wine because they didn't trust that they would be able to get decent wine in Scotland, which is maybe true. Doing that work then allowed us to, rather than not work with them again, be like, 'OK, what can we do next? How can we build on this?' That then allowed us to do the Cube work which was totally epic and amazing.

BE: Yeah, that was like six—normally there's three people in Metamkine, but there were six of them in a tent, basically a four-sided screen.

BM: How big was the screen? They were like six metres by six.

BE: It took up like a third of DCA 1 and they were inside there with buckets to piss in because they were there for a three- or four-hour performance. It was amazing.

BM: So that idea of keeping working with people, and keeping building, is something that we continue to do. It feels quite generative to not just—we were speaking to some other folks who do curating stuff and organising, and they were like, 'no, we don't have that privilege to be able to continue to work with people and deepen relationships, our institution is like: "work with someone once, tick, next."' So, that has been interesting to reflect on, why we've done that.

BE: And that's a thing that has deepened more in Episodes because we like to work with the same people again and again, and try and deepen our relationship with them rather than just flit about for whoever is cool at the time or something. There are people who have been to like five Episodes, half of them, spread across different things.

Do you want some Ken Jacobs anecdotes?

MJ: Yes, please, that would be great.

BE: The first time we tried to work with Ken Jacobs he'd only done one live performance in the last fifteen years and it was at Anthology Film Archives with John Zorn. John Zorn is like a really famous, Jewish, downtown New York experimental musician from the 1980s onwards. He runs the Tzadik label, he also ran The Stone, a really important, influential music venue, and he's like a McArthur Genius Award and stuff. We emailed him [Jacobs] and said, 'would you be interested in doing something?' And he just emailed back and said, 'I've only done one thing in ten, fifteen years, and it was with John Zorn, so you better speak to him.' It was impossible to speak to John Zorn. Then one day I was walking down beside Edinburgh Waverley station and my phone rang and the phone goes, and someone says, 'Barry, it's John.' 'John who?' I don't know who this is, and he goes, 'it's John Zorn.' 'Oh, shit, hi.' And he's like, 'yeah, I saw the email you sent to Ken'—I'm not telling this story

properly but it's something like, 'I saw the email you sent to Ken and I just get the feeling we're at different places in our careers.' I guess I was like twenty-seven or something and he was like the most famous experimental musician of his generation, and he normally just played at The Barbican. So, I was like, 'I don't know what you mean.' He's like, 'I don't really leave the house for less than \$10,000.' Without really thinking, I was just like, 'oh, wow, how do you buy milk?' He was just like, 'eh, I don't really think this is going to work.' And, that was our first interaction with Ken Jacobs, really stupid. But we did manage to work with him. [...] His live performance is basically not even a projector, it's like a magic lantern performance with a theatre light and a fan that spins round and then all kinds of lenses, that he's basically built out of a—

BM: But it's a secret, so he has to construct this in a—in DCA this was constructed in a piece of scaffolding that had lots of black curtaining around it so nobody could really look at the secret of what his mechanism is.

BE: But it's kind of build out of Mechano and spare bits of wood and it kind out looks like someone has taken a flea market and attached lenses to it.

BM: There's a lot of Vaseline involved.

BE: But it's really incredible, he just uses the same frame over and over again and you get the sense of movement. It's like moving without moving, it's really incredible. Anyway, any time we work with him we always had problems with his set up because it's just made out of random bits, so in Dundee we put him through a step-down transformer and everything just started melting. We're like, 'what the fuck is going on?' We're transforming this down by forty volts, or down to 100 volts from 240. We'd always be learning things that the venues didn't know about themselves, so it turns out that DCA has a particularly strong power supply, so their power supply actually runs at 270 volts. So, when you step it down it still melts American gear. Or, like, when we took Ken—we did a show at the BFI IMAX—and Ken projected onto that.

BM: That was epic.

BE: And we did so much trying to plan because he just uses a little par can as the light source.

BM: With a throw of like—he's expecting to do some downtown New York loft space, so it's a throw of like three metres or something and this is the IMAX in the middle of Waterloo roundabout.

BE: And we'd done loads of—it was like the first time that we'd done something in London as KYTN, so this was like all the London cognoscenti were coming and everything, this is a big deal. We'd done loads of work to try and get a lamp that was going to project onto that and then the whole day of the set-up it was just impossible, it was not going to work at all. I was livid.

BM: Well, the night before was the set-up because we only had a tiny slot the next day because obviously the IMAX were screening Madagascar 2.

BE: That's right! It said, '*Madagascar 2, Madagascar 2, Ken Jacobs, Madagascar 2.*' That's what it said outside the IMAX. For an evening, it was just like this isn't going to work at all, there's no way to get a light on there. Eventually, I talked a manager into putting white light through the actual IMAX projector and put that through his lenses. We had to work out how far he had to sit from it because otherwise it would melt his stuff. That was fucking amazing because the images were like twenty metres tall or something.

BM: Some of the things that I was going to bring up were that it was totally amazing to work with Ira Cohen. The fact that they did, Sunburned Hand of the Man, did a kind of live soundtrack version of [The] Invasion of Thunderbolt Pagoda [1968] then led to it getting released, so there's a DVD of that now. That was pretty amazing.

BE: He was a big name-dropper.

BM: Who was? Ira Cohen.

BE: Yeah, he was like, 'that reminds me of the time I had dinner with Vladimir Nabokov.'

BM: I mean fair enough. What about Tony Conrad's [The Flicker].

BE: Tony Conrad was a really lovely guy, it was really great to work with him. I don't know maybe we're running out of—I've got lots of anecdotes about old film dudes.

BM: But we ended up constructing a pretty epic piece of carpentry with DCA for that, how big was that screen? It was sort of 'lenticular,' wooden.

BE: Something that was weird about that and Tony was about the relationship to London compared to being in Scotland, is like, we did all these things with Tony but then he was going to come on the KYTN tour we'd organised that was going to go to London (alongside Bristol and Glasgow) and then Tate asked him to do a version of *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain*, which we were first people to have done with him live, in like twenty years, when we'd done it in Dundee. He got asked to do it in the Turbine Hall at the Tate and then had to sign an exclusivity contract which meant that he wasn't allowed to be on our tour. Then we'd done some things with him that he'd wanted to do and had never been able to do, so we like encouraged and supported. So, we materially altered the presentation of that thing then it got done at the Tate and therefore it seems like in the archive that it was a Tate thing that happened. There's a DVD of it which is a recording of the thing that happened at the Tate. Dundee and what happened before that, and the three things that we'd done with Tony before that are not even a footnote in that.

BM: So, there's definitely an institutional power difference. Obviously DCA aren't the Tate and we're not the Tate, that definitely came across. Other things, that AMM / Malcolm Le Grice—

BE: I don't know if you want to hear a list of hundreds of things that were really good?

MJ: This is really helpful but I guess maybe keeping more to infrastructural stuff because I'm conscious that we're just over an hour now. I've maybe one thing left to ask about Kill Your Timid Notion and then maybe we can talk about moving into the Episodes. That's just about audience and the network of people who were coming to this, do you remember how people responded? Who came? Was it local, or international?

BE: I remember it being a mixture of both of those things. There would be a lot of work, so there were maybe three tiers of audience: the work you would do to get people from Dundee, that would be the artistic community and from Duncan of Jordanstone to come; then I guess there would be a broader Scottish artistic community, some years we would put buses on from Glasgow and Edinburgh that would take people up, that was a thing that the DCA did for a lot of their openings—I don't know if they still do that—but—

BM: Yeah, I think they do. I think we only ended up doing that one or maybe two years.

BE: Right, OK. So, people would come up anyway. A lot of people who came to Instal would come up or people from Glasgow and Edinburgh would come up. Then there would definitely be an international—not loads of people—but, especially all of the people that you would see at Rotterdam. Did Peter Taylor ever come?

BM: Dunno. I think so.

BE: I think Peter, like Stoffel [Debusysere] from Courtisane.

BM: That guy from Leeds.

BE: From LUMIN. Will Holder.

BM: It was mostly Dundee people, it was mostly Dundee and Glasgow/Edinburgh people that came. We did like vox pops one year as part of the documentation thing. One year the DCA 2 was used as a sort of investigative—in the last year, 2010—we used that as kind of investigation space because there was a whole suite of workshops and investigations we did, alongside the programme. Where people could get in a bit more in depth and intimately with some of the ideas and work of the artists. So, that space was just all like flipchart paper with various people's responses and feedbacks and thoughts about the investigations that they'd been part of.

BE: How many people used to come? When it was really busy maybe 200-220 and when it wasn't going well, like—

BM: Eighty. Eighty to sort of 200.

BE: Maybe 250.

BM: Yeah, it depends. I remember like the Tower of Light, Stan Brakhage thing was really busy.

BE: Oh, yeah. Well it had somebody from Sonic Youth in it, so... I guess another thing in terms of audience, we would do these things—definitely towards the end, like maybe the last two or just the last one, maybe with Luke Fowler.

BM: There was one year we had a little collaboration with Generator.

BE: Oh yeah, Generator Projects in Dundee. I think our constitution as a C.I.C. stills says that if we go bust then Generator get all of our gear.

BM: Oh yeah, Generator get everything. I don't know if they know that.

BE: The committee must have changed fifteen times since then.

BM: Yeah, it's a funny one. It's not like DCA were that interested from a marketing department point of view, and we certainly didn't necessarily have the capacity at each of the KYTNs to be like, 'hi, who are you? Where did you come from?' There was one year that we did that. Was that with Jan McTaggart? As part of like an organisational development we got from the arts council, there was a bunch of questionnaires that got filled out one year. And there are all the post event box office reports which had the postcode analysis...

BE: I think something in terms of what you're asking about, certainly when we started out it wasn't called artists' moving image or anything like that, so there wasn't the same validity within visual art. There weren't a lot of visual art people that would come. Then, I remember one of the years, did you get asked to contribute to it or was it whilst you were still at Scottish Screen? The arts council organised a symposium on film and moving image at Edinburgh Film Festival. It was organised by Wendy Law who was visual art officer.

BM: Who had the speciality of moving image.

BE: The title of the event was 'But is it art?' So, it was completely questioning whether film could be considered as art or something. So, there was definitely like a tension there.

BM: Infrastructurally, maybe another thing to think about of the possibility of where it could have gone is that we had some conversations with Edinburgh International Film Festival, before Kim started, when Shane Danielsen was still the director, about their Black Box strand that had been started in Lizzie Francke's time, because Louis Benassi was the programmer for a while. That was really interesting for us, being at that time still part of working for the Edinburgh Film Festival but seeing the paucity of programming around experimental film work and the frustration around what was possible with what, at the time to us—although I would probably look at it very differently now—what seemed like massive budgets with massive venues and the possibility to do all kinds of things with them but they weren't really taking it in that direction or taking it that far. We did meet with them one year about the possibility of collaborating but I think we just scared the pants of them, because we were saying, 'we should be doing massive expanded cinema things in the Usher Hall,' and they were like, 'uh.' We spoke to the Traverse as well, we were going to bring Kill You Timid Notion to Edinburgh and chatted with the Traverse, chatted sort of reasonably in depth with the Edinburgh College of Art about it, but it just didn't happen.

BE: But, those film festivals models just don't have any programming money, so they just rely on submissions or not paying screening fees, even. If they can't afford to pay screening fees for a film, they certainly can't afford to do live programming with actual people who need to, you know, eat.

BM: Exactly. That's the difference between a model where, you know, our work is project funded by an arts council and isn't based on a profit model, it's not about making an income or—

BE: But that's different now, I mean like LUX Scotland gets funding and so much visual art—

BM: But it's pretty much the onus on the film festivals to showcase that kind of stuff, like Oberhausen and Rotterdam and all these kinds of places. But even in those contexts of film

festivals, when we did eventually have a little bit of money to go to some of them, we just found it really frustrating. Again, the models there are: put as many programmes on as possible, there's a ten-minute turnaround, next, next, next. Oberhausen does a slightly better job, and Rotterdam latterly with Peter Taylor's input into WORM and things like that, have taken live and expanded cinema experiences more seriously, or more sort of immersive exhibitions and having the space for those as opposed to having to cram it in during a film programme. But that's all kind of happened after we have segued out of explicitly that work.

BE: I think Courtisane were our peers at the time, in Ghent. They were people we were closest to.

MJ: Great. Could you tell me about that segue then?

BM: Yeah, so 2010. The way we talked about it at the time and maybe talk a little bit about it now, is, I guess, Instal started in 2001/2002 so had normally been going for about ten years. From an experimental music point of view, comparative festivals, if there were comparative festivals, were happening in Europe, like Sonic Acts or Impact, or people like that.

BE: Unsound.

BM: Unsound hadn't started. It was more Impact and Sonic Acts that were like, 'hey, we've reached ten years old, here's to another ten years.'

BE: What was the one that was in Barcelona?

BM: Primavera, no Sonar.

BE: Sonar, yeah. The ones in Europe had all just turned into like million-pound things.

BM: With lots of European money. So, we were like, 'we don't particularly want to be a model of like "Scotland's premier music festival, happens every year at The Arches in October."' That wasn't why we got into this so we thought that breaking a little bit of that model would keep us evolving. I think there was also something about a political consciousness where when we'd started having passion and interests and curiosity into some of the art forms that were expressed in these festivals, I think we kind of, again probably naively, thought that they had some kind of transformative capacity. By their very nature of being 'avant-garde' there was a possibility of raising people's consciousness, through those art forms. Through the work do doing this praxis research, in-event research, we were getting to the stage of going, 'I'm not entirely sure if that's true.' We thought it was maybe true, and then you research something and go, 'well maybe it's not.' So, we kind of thought that having a 100% fidelity just to an art form like Oberhausen and Courtisane and other festivals have a fidelity to an art form, didn't really fit the way that the research practice for us needed to go. Do you see what I mean? It needed to open up beyond a genre or art form-based thing. Not closing off the possibility of works and artists within those art forms to engage with political ideas and ideas of social justice, but that it wasn't just 100% always going to be embodied in those forms.

BM: DCA had, in the interim period, tried to have a bit of a restructure internally, so that whereas before we hadn't had to have had with the head curator or head of art, this restructure meant that we did. So, it wasn't a relationship that was forged of desire, on either side.

BE: But also, I can see how it's a sensible thing to them / on their part, is if they're putting £40,000 of in-kind staff support into a festival then they want to have more control over that.

BM: Yeah, that's how they managed the restructure, you're right, the head curator became the deputy director.

BE: So, there was just a breakdown. So, as well as thinking that we're finished with this specific art form thing, there was just a breakdown in our ability to work with that person. Similarly, with Instal, the reason that we moved to Tramway was that the programmers from the Tramway came and loved it so much and were much more forthcoming with a supportive environment that we could do something in.

BM: Perhaps necessarily so, in retrospect. It was a massive building and they needed to make their money to subsist. But that meant that he prioritised beer sales over experimental music or art. The clubs took priority over a sound check.

BE: It was definitely a difficult working environment.

BM: [...] So, that precipitated a shift to then thinking about doing something at the Tramway. So, there was a transition period in 2010 when we did Uninstal, as a way to leave The Arches and have an introductory event at the Tramway whilst also saying where we've come from but exploring a new space and exploring a slightly new structure.

BE: That was thematically arranged per day, or each three-hour section was thematically arranged so there would be loads of mini-programmes or they were like mini-episodes within things.

BM: They still had things to do with sound, film, but it wasn't explicitly about that all the way through.

BE: But, the thing I wanted to stress was as well as these thinking strategically about how we wanted to develop, they also were down to personal relationships: the way that thing shift, the way that things change, which is also down to us. So, there's personal relationships with people outside of Arika, there's the theoretical or conceptual ideas behind the stuff we want to be doing, maybe like ethical ideas. Then the idea of an episode, calling it an Episode, it wasn't a form that already had meaning. So, it's not a work like biennial, or festival, or symposium, or conference, so you could fill it with your own meaning and it wouldn't always have to be the same. Wouldn't always have to be about the same thing, it wouldn't have to always be about the same art form, they just happened episodically. Also saying that they happen episodically means something from one informs what happens in the next one rather than what you see at most international biennials or experimental music festivals or, I don't know, GI or something where it's like, 'this year's theme is Attention.' That means nothing and it's got no link to what you did before. So, what we like to do is deepen relationships and deepen thinking with people over periods of time and we don't want to prescribe where we're going to end up. By starting Episode 1, we don't want to know what we'll be doing for Episode 7. So, we can have this iterative, episodic way of working. That became more and more—I think it started off coming out of KYTN 2010 and Instal 2010, as being like a Marxist analysis of art and culture and moved much more into—

BM: Not very friendly, possibly, for our audiences.

BE: Quite antagonistic and then moved much more into an engagement with social justice and thinking not necessarily about art but, well we say, the aesthetic registers of sociality.

BM: Or trying to take that idea of thinking about a set of ideas. That's the core piece of research and then thinking about who, or what, or what kind of art forms need to be there to interrogate or press into that question or idea.

BE: Or not necessarily art forms. So, aesthetic registers of sociality being the way that communities see or want to be seen, look or want to be seen, or how they listen or want to be heard, how they move or want to be moved, things like that.

BM: [...] We also want to reflect on the fact that our first Episode was about film and that was a place where we wanted to start from in that first year where we did three Episodes over three months—which we will never do again, that was a really bad idea. But, that first one was from a place of: OK, if you still want to interrogate what's possible for film, expanded cinema, moving image, to interrogate ideas of politics and social justice, what do you do and where do you go? It's interesting to reflect that that's where the Episodes started, an investigation. And Episode 1 was great, it was nice to do something again at the CCA. We'd just done one of the KYTN tours, the Glasgow version of the KYTN tour was at the CCA.

BE: I'd like to do stuff at the CCA, but they just don't have budgets.

BM: And the CCA, if we're talking about infrastructure, what is tricky about the CCA is that it's not got that many spaces. Because we're doing a festival environment, often with multiple things where people are going from one thing to another, and the two things are very different—the set-ups are very different—so there was a whole, for Episode 1, a whole complex, frustrating set of discussions with the gallery curator about accessing their gallery spaces for non-art purposes. Eventually we partially won and got access to the front gallery.

BE: Yeah, the actual big downstairs gallery, we got access to the front of that to do two workshops in, one with Ian White.

BM: But in those conversations with the CCA, they were like, 'no you cannot do something in the gallery, not in the main gallery, no way.' So, we could only ever do stuff in CCA 5 which is great but, you know, it's built for music and performance, it's not a screening space at all really. So, the dynamics of what we were able to do in that festival were really different to what, infrastructurally, we were able to do at DCA—because the building is different.

BE: You always have this pressure of thinking that funders require you to have a certain number—you need a relationship between a number of people and how much it costs and so you just have more flexibility in Tramway with multiple spaces and bigger capacity.

BM: Episode 1 was good and from then onwards when the idea has spoken, or a piece of work has spoken to the ideas and if it's a particular film piece, then it gets included in the programme. There's no set-out from the outset, to be like, 'here's the idea, now we need to go and programme six programmes of short films about it.' That's something that we've moved away from a little bit, which I have mixed feelings about, because, you know, it's fun to watch lots of short films and think about the relationships between them and make a little narrative argument.

BE: But other people do that now.

BM: Lots of other people do that.

BE: One thing that has been nice, structurally, is the proliferation of other film festivals or artists' moving image in Scotland meant that—I used to think that we were the only people who were exhibiting that kind of stuff and so we had a responsibility to keep doing it but with there being Counterflows and all these other experimental music festivals or AMIF for example we don't have to do that, it's not our job.

BM: Yeah, someone else can do that.

BE: Someone else can do that, maybe better than we would, and there's a diversity of it, so we have to think about what we're good at doing.

MJ: Great, thank you. That's been really comprehensive. I might just look at my questions now to see if there's anything we've not cleared up. [...] I guess maybe to combine some of these questions because we've covered so much already, just to talk about Scottishness a bit more because that's something I'm mining and what it means to make work as an artist, as a curator, as a programmer. I wonder if you could reflect a bit on how you think being based in Scotland has affected the work that you show, the way that you operate, anything like that?

BM: I think we've touched on that a little bit in terms of the desire to bring work from outside of Scotland, which we do through the Episodes as well, we bring stuff internationally to Scotland that you wouldn't be able to see otherwise and that's been a strong thread through all of our work. I think, we were talking earlier about what that then means for the dynamic relationship between what we do in Scotland and what's happening in London and how there's a relative marginalisation—with a very small 'm'—happening there, is kind of interesting to reflect on.

BE: I was going to say that at different times over the last eighteen years now I guess, we have to say that we're different kinds of people at different times to access resources. So, we're always just trying to access resources to do stuff. Sometimes we have to call ourselves curators, sometimes we're like a production company, when we at the Whitney Biennial we had to call ourselves artists, we have to present as different things all of the time. I think there are some things that we fail at in terms of being local or something, in regard to that. I think we think of ourselves putting together programmes based on ideas, we don't think of ourselves as having a responsibility to represent a national artform. We're not like Buzzcut, 'we're into performance art and everybody who is into performance art has a chance to perform at it.' We've never felt that we're some kind of art form specific representational platform or something.

BE: In terms of Scottishness though, I think that sometimes we have been really lucky in terms of the infrastructure and the funding that we've been able to access compared to—if we were in London, I don't know how we would get—there are peers of ours like the LMC (London Musician's Collective) or Electra or a bunch of organisations that started out or were going when we were going and doing film stuff, that all had all of their funding cut. I know that when we went to try and do our tour in London, trying to negotiate access to space was incredible, compared to like in Scotland, you know, the Tramway makes a contribution to the budget for us to be there, we get in-kind support, and we're written into their business

plan. And so—and we were at DCA and they would put their programming money in—you got to London and you'd have to pay thousands of pounds to hire the venues, unless you're curated by one of their curators. All of those negotiations were really fraught so there is something about like, we've found, access to spaces which were recently refurbished through millennial money and that still had a level of programming money that they could subcontract us to do some of their programming. That's not something that was replicated in England. I feel like we got a platform, we were at the right place at the right time to have access to a set of resources that we wouldn't have had if we were based in Manchester or London.

BM: I mean that even happened with Music Lovers' Field Companion, you know. Big silly building gets opened and we're the people, the Scottish people who get asked to do an experimental music festival there. I don't know necessarily what that says about the people making those decisions. That's what happened.

BE: What it says is that the person who asked us to do that used to work in Scotland at The Arches. I felt like we had access to resources that we wouldn't have got in other places, if that answers your questions. So, there was like a structural ability to, there was something about devolved Scottish arts funding being useful to us. And, there's still a level of protection that, as bad as all the cuts have been to funding in Scotland, they're still not as bad as they've been in England. Whether you believe in nationalism or not, the role of culture, in terms of the nationalist argument and placing that centrally, does protect us a little bit from—protects culture, broadly, from funding cuts, up to a point, so far. There is a double edge to that though—there have been different regimes at Creative Scotland who have interpreted that in very different ways and there have certainly been some where, you know, you started—under Andrew Dixon it seemed like you were going to get funded if you—you know, it was all celebratory tourist stuff, very directly like a picture postcard idea of Scottishness, but that seems to have abated a bit.

MJ: Thank you, yeah that's a really interesting account of funding that's at odds with some other people I've seen, so actually that level of contradiction is really rich and helpful.

BE: What have other people said?

MJ: I guess coming from different positions, artists have found it increasingly difficult since the early 2000s to find any sort of bursary or any sort of residency that doesn't have some sort of qualification attached to it. And in, my own research as well I've been sifting through the Scottish Arts Council records and seeing the levels of investment people were getting. People were getting like £30,000 a year as an artist bursary to make film work, falling to like £9k, and now the biggest award in Scotland is the Margaret Tait Award which has just gone up to £15k. If you were to draw it on graph it's really disheartening.

BE: Can I just qualify that what I'm saying is talking about the 2000s, the 2000-2010 for Kill Your Timid Notion. We're lucky that we got in at that point, so that when the funding cuts came we'd already been established as like a—like Buzzcut or Counterflows don't get the level of funding that we used to get when we were doing things like what they do. So, yeah, I definitely agree with that trend, that it's like diminishing all the time. We were lucky that we established ourselves before the crash, basically—just a fluke on our part, we're not any more

deserving than some of those other organisations. Then there's that age-old problem of how do they refresh their portfolio of people they fund.

BM: And specifically, we're talking about funding for an organisation.

BE: Yeah, I'm not talking about individual artists.

BM: And even that dichotomy in itself is problematic, obviously. When it's like a call for arts money, how do you get arts money to the people making the art? How do you cut out the middle man in that situation? I think we're definitely really sensitive to the relative privileges that we have specifically in this situation. It's definitely something that we are very aware of and constantly reflecting on in terms of being able to support artists in Scotland and we also keep coming back to the limits of what we can do as a small organisation whilst keeping our core drive without turning it into something else. It's a really frustrating one.

E. Luke Fowler

Marcus Jack: If you could start by telling me about your interaction with artists' moving image or experimental film, avant-garde film, whatever you want to call it, starting with art school?

Luke Fowler: I went to [Duncan of Jordanstone] College of Art and I wasn't part of the video art department there that was run by Stephen Partridge. I was part of the printmaking department, run by Stephen Partridge's wife, Elaine Shemilt, who was a video artist herself and also did printmaking. Already I was an outsider of the video art education process, but what I did do was a sort of introduction in first year—because in first year at Dundee you get a taster of all the different disciplines—so I did a time-based art module and saw some Gary Hill, Bill Viola and obviously I'd seen the time-based art degree shows each year, so I had a kind of understanding of video art as a genre from that.

What happened was that I'd been going to the Third Eye Centre, or CCA, since I was a youngster, so I'd grown up going to see the pioneers of performance and video art like Douglas Gordon—I'd seen *24 Hour Psycho*—and Dalziel + Scullion, and Left and Right and people like that. So that was my grounding in video, through seeing things at the CCA in the 1990s and at Tramway. I remember vividly seeing Stan Douglas's show at Transmission Gallery and being pretty amazed by that and of course *24 Hour Psycho*. But I never really got schooled in that at art school but you could borrow the equipment from the time-based art department so I borrowed video cameras and went away and made my own videos.

My breakthrough in making my first piece was through one of the tutors called Alan Woods, who was a member of the Situationist International, and who showed us, in one of his lectures, *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* by Johan Grimonprez [1997] and *Rock My Religion* by Dan Graham [1984]. I remember being completely blown away but also them being such different forms from what I was used to seeing in terms of the vernacular of video art being Gillian Wearing, the early Scandinavian video art at the time which was a lot of performance to camera, or Douglas Gordon, Fiona Tan pieces which were very much used with—one trick ponies really, archival, the use of archival scene, that was slowed down, manipulated but not really anything that was ever created into something that had an essayistic form. So, seeing those films that had essayistic forms was something that was an epiphany for me. I'd grown up watching television, things like *Arena* and *The South Bank Show* and being absorbed in televisual forms and seeing that artists were taking on that baton, that was a turning point for me because it showed me how I could do it myself.

MJ: So, stuff that was less structuralist?

LF: Yes, less purist artists' moving image but stuff that was more populist and more accessible and had a narrative and had history and worked socially. Those were the things that I was interested in at the time, working with a more popular vernacular: something that was accessible to people outside of the artworld.

MJ: Just to get a bit of timeline here, you went to art school in what year?

LF: 1996, and graduated in 2000.

MJ: And so, experiencing Dan Graham, that was in the same timeline.

LF: That was at art school. *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* we saw the year it came out. I suppose what I'm saying is that I'd been exposed to Douglas Gordon and Bill Viola and I'd realised that that wasn't my bag and if that was video art, then no thanks. When I saw these other artists adopting these documentary forms, and also seeing—like Chris Marker was a massive turning point and epiphany for me—so that was when things started to change and I realised I wanted to make my own documentaries.

MJ: It reminds me a bit of the Peter Wollen text, *The Two Avant-Gardes*, and the binary there between the political and the formal or structural. I'm quite interested in your experience in Dundee and how that city, or the ecology of that place differs to Glasgow or if you have any comments on that, particularly as it related to film and video?

LF: It's a bit of vacuum, Dundee. There's the Generator, there was no DCA at the time, so there was the Generator which is their equivalent of Transmission and Stephen Sutcliffe and Fiona Jardine were on the committee there and Kevin Hutcheson was around, Anna McLauchlan, Scott Myles, were all recent graduates for example Alan Michael as well. The biggest influence or the most important thing for us was the fact they were hiring a lot of young tutors. People that had been at Glasgow like Vicky Morton, Cathy Wilkes and Graham Fagan. Those tutors really helped to sweep away a lot of the deadwood and bring in visiting tutors like Jim Lambie and Toby Webster and Simon Starling, a lot of Glasgow-based artists would come up to Dundee to talk and give tutorials. What I liked about it was the fact that it was a small enough scene to know everyone and have a really strong community and it wasn't that far enough away from Glasgow to go back at the weekend and see things. So, I'd go back and go to Optimo or go to Pure and go to things at the Transmission Gallery. I actually had my first solo show at the Transmission Gallery while I was still a student in Dundee, in 1999.

MJ: Did you find that Glasgow and Dundee were quite porous and interchangeable or were those quite calcified, different communities?

LF: Well the Dundonian community, the local community, is very different from the Glaswegian community and it has its own identity that's completely distinct from Glasgow in the same way that Edinburgh has a community that is distinct. I would never conflate the two or say they were interchangeable. What I'm trying to articulate is that as a student from Glasgow, born and raised in Glasgow, it was easy for me to migrate from one place to another and move between the two quite fluidly. There was a strong competition between Dundee and Glasgow and Glasgow viewed Dundee as a poor relation in terms of culture, culturally, and always looked down on Dundee.

MJ: You mentioned Stephen Partridge earlier and the Electronic Imaging department and I wonder if that was something that felt quite separate from the other fine art practices?

LF: It did seem separate and it seemed like there was this—they were really part of a vanguard that had strong connections with London and Hull, like Hull Time Based Arts, than they did geographically with Glasgow or Edinburgh. Tutors would come up, like David Cunningham was an external assessor and would come up from London and assess in Dundee, so would Mike Stubbs, who'd come up from Hull. It seemed both sort of vanguard but also kind of somewhere stuck in the past and still trying to perpetuate a kind of video art that really had strong links to early video art. There was this early video art project, in the same way that structural film was of a time and is very much part of late 1970s culture. I sort

of saw time-based art being a bit of a dinosaur and it didn't really move on. Although the technology moved on and you had tutors like Lei Cox blazing ahead by embracing this new digital technology, but it was all pretty... I can't really comment on that publicly.

MJ: I get a sense of what you mean. So, you finish art school in 2000 and then what happened?

LF: The very significant thing that happened to me was that my father died whilst I was still at art school, just about to do my degree show. That basically threw all of my plans, or I didn't have any plans but it meant that I had to go back and look after my people back home. I had quickly got a job at The Modern Institute and did research for them for a show about Glasgow music culture, Glasgow music history, called *Electric City* [2000]. Then I was doing this thing called Shadazz which was a video art-music crossover project and I was developing my own practice as a video artist, installation artist, what have you, and at the same time involved in bands in Glasgow.

The most significant things to me were the Shadazz project which I was doing when I graduated in 2000. For me, the purpose of that project was to bring together different artists; different video artists, with musicians, and to foster collaborations where I thought they didn't exist prior to that. I was trying to make a connection between these two different scenes. I suppose it was also a crude way of making friends and getting to know people in the scene in Glasgow, like Duncan Campbell and Sarah Tripp and Anne-Marie Copestake. I already knew a lot of people from doing my exhibition at Transmission and through going out with Anna McLauchlan, so I knew Katy Dove and Anne-Marie Copestake through Anna. Through Cathy Wilkes I knew Torsten Lauschmann and Rob Kennedy. Through going out to the 13th Note, I met Diskono, which was an anarchic, multi-media crew from Alloa. I soon became closely connected to them and collaborated on a number of projects with them.

So, I did Shadazz, and did a show in Casco in Utrecht. That was called *UTO*, Unidentified Theory Objects [*UTO: The Technology of Tears*, 2001]. It was a show I curated where I invited people like Jakob Kolding, Inventory, Diskono and theorist Franz Liebl to do projects there. That was the early years for me in Glasgow, it was all about making my work and trying to be an active part of the community around the Transmission Gallery and the 13th note.

MJ: You mentioned quite a lot of artists who are also musicians there and Shadazz was a crossover project, so was that Modern Institute project. Was there a really easy flow between these disciplines? I guess the narrative of the Glasgow art scene is often about the interwoven nature of these things, did you feel that?

LF: I did and I didn't. I felt that there's a lot made about all the artists' being in a band in Glasgow, but there was also a lot of filmmakers and video artists that weren't in bands and in my mind had very—well, their awareness of sound and the sonic in their work was still quite rudimentary and they would graft on a Johnny Cash song or a popular song onto their video rather than really think about sound design or think about sound as an integral part of the filmmaking process or video-making process. It often seemed like an afterthought for a lot of people. As experimental music was something that I was incredibly enthusiastic about I tried to propagate that and extol the virtues of those vices to other individuals that were not yet on board.

I should also say that at the time there was another parallel project to Shadazz which was this Radio Tuesday project that was happening, it was run by Mark Vernon, Duncan Campbell and Alex Frost. That was probably one of the first projects, that I knew of, that embraced sound art in Glasgow. It wasn't just me that was interested in experimental music and sound art, there were certainly a few others as well. They've always been my two strong loves; experimental music and experimental film. It seemed like in hindsight, I was there at the right place and the right time in Glasgow.

Barry Esson had started Instal, which was an experimental music festival that was run at The Arches in Glasgow, and then migrated and started doing a parallel project in Dundee (when the DCA opened up) called Kill Your Timid Notion. I was involved both as a spectator and latterly as an invited artist in Kill Your Timid Notion. For me that was heaven sent and it just seemed like a really great time to have these festivals that looked back at expanded cinema, structural film, flicker film, Tony Conrad, Paul Sharits, Metamkine, all these incredible artists. Saw AMM, saw Gustav Metzger perform, saw Henri Chopin perform, Charlemagne Palestine, it was just a complete gift. It was incredible. It was as significant as those early moments of seeing *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* and Dan Graham.

MJ: I wonder if you could tell me a bit more about Kill Your Timid Notion as an audience member, as someone who was there?

LF: I was quite precocious as a young artist, and brazen, and so I would just go up to the people that were there (and that I admired) and strike up a conversation. I remember Ken Jacobs was there and hanging out with him. There was Jérôme Noetinger from Metamkine, and just going up to these people and talking to them and hanging out with them because it was this four-day festival. Again, William Raban was there, Guy Sherwin, Malcolm [Le Grice] was there as well. It was really an amazing place to be to see these artists but also because there was very little going on and they seemed quite approachable. Theorists as well, like Christoph Cox was invited to give a lecture there, I got his email and we became friends and remain in contact to this day. I don't know whether Barry and Bryony intended it to be an accidental community but, for me, it became the start of an international community of experimental filmmakers. I remember there were folk over from Australia showing work, Dirk de Bruyn from Australia, collectives like [The Jewelled] Antler Collective from California, Loren Chasse, Sachiko M from Japan. Really international and broad in what it showed, they had historic programmes and you had programmes that intercepted or were interwoven with music, but it was more than just that as well.

MJ: I've only really known their work through Arika, do you the two bear a resemblance or is Arika a completely different thing?

LF: Arika *now* is very different. It's just developed in the way that—I'd describe it a bit like the way that Anthony McCall developed as an artist, he started out making works like *Line Describing a Cone* [1973], pure formalism and then started making these confrontational, political essays like *Argument* [1978]. To me that's where Arika are at now, it seems they have disavowed their early work.

MJ: If we could skip back so I could get a clearer picture of Shadazz. Could you tell me some of the specifics? When it ran, for how long? It was a series of VHS tapes, is that right? Or did it have other lives?

LF: It started off as a fanzine that had a CD attached to it that was a lot of unreleased electronic music from Glasgow and Dundee at that time. Then it did this video and another magazine insert and then it just became a record label basically.

MJ: So *Evil Eye is Source*, is that just the video project within the bigger label?

LF: Yeah, that was a one-off. It also had a live outing at the Royal College of Art in a project there, we did a launch for it and Pro Forma played live.

MJ: The organisation behind that, was it just you?

LF: Yeah

MJ: If we could go back to around 2003, 2004. What was going on for you then?

LF: I was in Becks Futures, I think in [2005]. It was after I did a show at the Cubitt Gallery with Emily Pethick and I did a residency in London where I stayed in Jeremy Deller and Tasha Amini's house, he was away doing a residency so we were actually in Peter Wollen's house that was being rented by Jeremy and Tasha. Me and my collaborator from Diskono, Kosten Koper, stayed there and made *The Way Out* [2003], which was the second film that I'd made. The first film was about R.D. Laing and Kingsley Hall [*What You See Is Where You're At*, 2001], and I made that for the show at DCA, it was called *Beyond* and it was the first year that the DCA opened. The second film I made was called *The Way Out* and that was the portrait of the recalcitrant punk musician Xentos 'Fray Bentos' from The Homosexuals. I think it was around that time that I did *Electric City*, so a lot of research went into that. I went and did this show in Annecy in France [2000]. It was this video festival, *Recontres Video*, and it was myself, Torsten Lauschmann, Katy Dove, Duncan Campbell and Fred Pederson that went over and represented Scotland. I think the year later, around [2003] or something like that, was probably the *Zenomap* project where I showed the same film, *The Way Out*, in Venice.

MJ: When does the switch for you between video and film happen?

LF: After that. So, I made another film which was the Cornelius Cardew film [*Pilgrimage from Scattered Points*, 2006] one or two years after *The Way Out* and that was the turning point where I started using 16mm and Super 8, up until then it was pretty much all archival. That was the turning point, after that film—*Pilgrimage from Scattered Points* was still pretty much Super 8—in a lot of ways I was inspired by Kill Your Timid Notion and seeing filmmakers at Kill Your Timid Notion and doing this residency in Bamberg with David Sherry, Louise Welsh, Julie Irving, and Zoe Macpherson. It was at that point that I travelled around Germany and wrote about an expanded cinema event that was curated by Mark Webber at a gallery in Stuttgart, the Staatsgalerie, anyway it was called Expanded Cinema and I wrote about it for *MAP* magazine. [...] I think I thought that I wanted to start making more works where I'd shot the film myself and I was ruling out Super 8 and was interested in 16[mm]. So *Bogman* [*Palmjaguar*, 2008] was the first film that really incorporated 16[mm] and video.

MJ: The consistent element I'd see in your practice is the portrait of a subject that's maybe some sort of outlier, but have there been diversions from that? Were you making a different kind of work at any point?

LF: It's a good question. I think I've always been quite diverted and swayed in different directions and it took me a long time to really—although I was interested in documentary and experimental film and combining the two—I think it still took me a long time to find my own language and grammar. When I started using 16mm, that was when the puzzle started fitting together a bit more for me because I started using the camera, really investigating the material properties of film rather than just through film editing software, where I was at one remove from the material.

But did I do other things? I think I did. You know like research projects. When I was in Bamberg I was basically making print works, posters and sound works and things like that. For me, there's always been a kind of pull between making music proper and making my art, or my films, and that pull still exists for me today. Sometimes I can combine the two, as in through sound projects where there's a connection, like [A] *Grammar for Listening* [2009] or the Cornelius Cardew film [*Pilgrimage from Scattered Points*, 2006] or something like that. But at other times the music just exists in its own right and it's not meant to really exist in the art world.

MJ: If we could switch back to finishing off that trajectory. We were probably at 2005, 2006. You've just started working more with film and then what happens?

LF: So *Bogman Palmjaguar* and getting involved in the history of structural film and expanded cinema and starting to work with the Bolex and then I won the Jarman Award and that brought me the commissions for Channel 4 where I made the *Tenement Films* [2009] and they were, I'd say, my apprentice works in—I suppose I was interested in Structural/Materialism and room films and I was kind of making my own version of that but also bringing this very strong interest in experimental music to bear on that, and collaboration; collaborating with different composers on those pieces. And then I went through a series of collaborations with Lee Patterson and a lot of those were live, expanded cinema-type works.

So, I had this whole period which is pretty much undocumented because they were live projects, so *The Room* [2008–2011] which was a collaboration with Keith Rowe, Peter Todd, myself and *Draw A Straight Line and Follow It* [B8016, 2008] which was a collaboration with Lee. After that, there was the Yokohama Triennale [2008] that I was involved in, and the Serpentine show [2009]. For those projects I started collaborating with Toshiya Tsunoda, who is a Japanese sound artist, and I went over to Japan and studied an aspect of the sound art scene there. That, again, was like a turning point in my practice: this more abstract, philosophical, installation-based works with Toshiya. They were shown in the Serpentine and also the British Art Show [2010].

MJ: And what year would that have been?

LF: That's towards the end of the 2000s. The Triennale was 2008. I suppose the big thing after that for me was the Turner Prize [2012] and making *All Divided Selves*, and that was [2011]. Yeah, I mean the next decade—it's kind of hard to believe it's a decade, 2010–2020, because it seems like a very long time, or it seems like I've done a lot in that time but it's also gone past incredibly quickly. Really, I suppose I've just consolidated and refined my practice, from *All Divided Selves*—sometimes going backwards, going back to basics, and sometimes completely returning to the archive, sometimes rejecting the historical and being in the present, observational films, phenomenal films, filmological films, films about being, films about environments, films about place. So yeah, I think, for me, the major—after 2010,

after *All Divided Selves*, probably the biggest, most significant things that happened in terms of my artistic practice were, like, friendships and influences of other artists like Peter Hutton and Robert Beavers and Ute Aurand and doing the LUX AAP [Associated Artists Programme] and working with Cerith Wyn Evans as a tutor in that, and Lis Rhodes, and Ian White of course.

So, I think why I maybe have a problem with this idea of artists' moving image as a community in Glasgow is because I think for me it's never really—you know there was that moment when it was a community and it operated and functioned as a community around Transmission Gallery, around Shadazz, but then after that it really fragmented and atomised and became more a series of friendships with individuals. And less coalescing around a centre, a community, a place like a co-op or a gallery, or a festival. Maybe it is the festival curse, the curse of Arika and bringing in—maybe Arika really opened the candy box and basically made the scene international and at that point it just seemed provincial to hang on to some kind of Scottish identity or Scottish-based video art or filmmaking.

As I've said, my influences were as much from the London Film-Makers' Co-op as from reading P. Adams Sitney's books and seeing Gregory Markopoulos and Robert Beavers' films. I think the ability to travel and to meet these living artists and living filmmakers really, in a way, was the end of the necessity for a very small, parochial scene and just opened up. [...] It wasn't like you had these influences and you kept them to yourself, I organised and brought Robert Beavers to Glasgow, organised a Friday event for him, organised a screening at the CCA for him, introduced him to Charlotte Prodger. So, it wasn't like you had these influences and you kept them to yourself, I did try to share things with the community here. [...] Your life changes. A lot of it was being less involved in the Transmission Gallery. There was a point when I was going out with Anna McLaughlin and I was almost a committee member myself, and showing there and going to every opening, and going to Tramway all the time. [...] There was this transition where I went from that camp to The Modern Institute and then slowly basically The Modern Institute became the community and the friends that I'd formed from the Transmission continued to foster those friendships rather than making new friendships with younger artists that were part of the Transmission. But I think maybe all generations have that: you have this community, you form your friend group, your peer group, and then you stick with that peer group and then there's the next generation and they form their peer group. So, I still see the same people from the Transmission, that I hung around with and showed with, we're still lifelong friends.

MJ: So, at this point, when there's this migration from Transmission to The Modern Institute, is it still like a non-commercial gallery?

LF: It started off that way, but it was always very much like they were doing projects, but they were representing artists and going to fairs and selling work. But it wasn't, let's say, it didn't seem like a blue-chip gallery at the start and it really wasn't much money to be made. It didn't seem like really anyone was making much money. It seemed much more experimental at the start and then it got more and more—it seemed like after Will Bradley left that perhaps there was more of a—I don't really want to—that's another story... Let's say obviously they took on more projects or more artists that were much more financially viable, let's say, than the earlier artists.

MJ: Do you know what year you would have started being represented by them?

LF: Well I started working with Toby the year that I did *Manifesta* and I think that was around 2002. It was while I was doing research for him for this *Electric City* exhibition. He just turned around and said, 'yeah, we're representing you.' No discussion.

MJ: That's maybe a good segue to move onto some of these questions which are more pointed. I think we've covered quite a lot of what I wanted to look at but The Modern Institute and commercial representation leads me onto thinking about resource and how you've been able to sustain your practice. I wonder if there are organisations or funds or programmes that you remember benefiting from or being able to use?

LF: Certainly, the arts council, the Scottish Arts Council, helped me with small amounts, small grants, but I basically lived off residencies. The money I would make from residencies, stipends, were my only source of income, pretty much even throughout The Modern Institute—this period that I've been represented there—I wasn't selling much work. Until the Turner Prize I wasn't really selling much work, around the time of the Turner Prize I started selling a little bit more but that's pretty short lived. It's hard to sell films, you don't get into experimental film or video art to make money. You'd be pretty foolish if you thought it was going to be a money-spinner.

MJ: Absolutely. I guess that leads cleanly into distribution. How do you feel that your work exists best? I don't want to say pro-black box or pro-white cube but how has your career navigated the two situations?

LF: For me, and I think there's certainly a handful of other people I could think of that also have this sort of dual life of showing in film festivals and galleries, but the cinema has always been a place where I've shown work and enjoyed showing work. I think it was probably when the CCA was renovated [2001] and installed the cinema, and we had access to it, and then seeing the Margaret Tait Award and Torsten's work in the cinema and [Stephen Sutcliffe's] work in the GFT, it was at those junctures where we started showing more in cinemas and making things specifically for cinemas with a cinematic quality, an awareness of that as—like the ratio, film ratios and surround sound protocols and DCPs and those sorts of things. Those were the things that we were thinking about. Sometimes, in my case, I was thinking about how to invert that and how to rupture those cinematic relations by having live elements or elements where the screen is a sail and gets blown by a fan, so it's not a static thing, it's sort of smashed, or in cinematic screenings where there's two projections and the projections move and the sound is contingent and is never the same twice. They were the things I was taking from expanded cinema and incorporating into my artistic practice.

MJ: In Scotland, specifically as the frame, apart from Kill Your Timid Notion, who was enabling this stuff to happen? Who would you have worked with to stage these events?

LF: We were invited by galleries. In Scotland you can count them on one hand: there was Transmission, there was Tramway, there was CCA, there was Fruitmarket—I never did anything with the Fruitmarket. Did something with Inverleith House. For me the most important ones were Transmission at the start, and then Tramway, and although I've never had a solo show at Tramway, a lot of my peers have had solo shows there. DCA, and as you say, Arika projects.

MJ: I guess maybe now LUX Scotland serves that function, to try and broker these relationships a bit better. Do you remember, or do you think LUX Scotland has made a significant impact on the way that things work?

LF: No. [...] I think it should, I'd like it to but I don't think it's anywhere near as significant as its counterpart in London. I think it's hard for me to be objective about it because I was on the board for a while and I have also, as I said, had a child and perhaps have less of a need to see new things, or to go out to everything. I don't have that FOMO attitude, or FOMO disease that a lot of young people, or curators have to have. I'd like it to be a big deal in the city and have more of a presence and to be influential. I don't see it but perhaps that's because it's in this state of transition of moving from Mason to Nicole to Kitty. It's not really had a vision. I'll repeat what I've said to you, and what I've said to all of these—which is basically my mantra throughout my time on the board of LUX Scotland, which is that I felt what Scotland was missing was a cine-literate culture and it had had moments of cine-literacy with Arika, with those projects and with CCA and things like that from certain curators coming in but it never had a base and it never had a co-op, it never had a purely experimental film or purely video art organisation like Four Corners or like Nowhere or Star and Shadow or Hull Time Based Arts of FACT in Liverpool, it never had a primarily—I mean it had G-Mac but [pffft], a bit of a joke that place.

Because it never really had this centre, it seems things were much more diffuse and it couldn't cohere around the medium. Now basically, I think it's the same problem—it's the irregularity of events and it's the fact that it's run by a paid curator, so it's like The Common Guild running the London Film-Makers' Co-op: it's just not a co-op. It's not a project for the community by the community, it's a job, it's somebody's job and it's always felt like that there's a big distinction between something being somebody's job and putting on project and applying for funding and it being a bit like something on a CV and part of their career and serving them a purpose, serving them a purpose whilst serving the community but they're not, to me, they're not artists. They're not artists, they're curators and that's the difference.

And, there's a massive difference between something that's run by artists for artists, like the Star and Shadow and L'Abominable in Paris, like a film workshop where they're all developing film, they're using printers, sharing resources. Star and Shadow in Newcastle as well, these feel like grassroots projects which are for artists, run by artists for artists and a community cohere around them. Maybe LUX in London does that as well, I think it does it because they have a location and a strong historic link to, first to Hoxton, The Lux Centre in Hoxton, and then prior to that, the London Film-Makers' Co-op. So, I just think it's a different thing and it's always seemed a bit too, for me, fragmented and a bit too flown in, parachuted in, rather than a need from below.

MJ: I guess to ask the same question but in an optimistic or positivist way: what would artists' moving image in Scotland need to enhance its profile? What is the aid that we don't have, is it a workshop or something?

LF: I don't think it's about profile. I don't think Scottish film and video art, or Scottish moving image needs to enhance its profile. It's never had a bad image. Everyone has always looked at Glasgow because of Douglas Gordon, it's never had a bad image. People have always come here and flocked here to see what artists are up to. For me, I don't think that is its problem.

MJ: OK, maybe in terms of sustainability rather than profile, what would benefit artist more here?

LF: I can't really talk for a community, I can only really talk for myself because I'm a mid-career artist. I don't represent the majority of artists in Glasgow working with moving image.

I think much younger artists represent and can speak to what the needs of younger artists are. As a mid-career artist that works in film, yeah it would be great to see something a bit more like the Star and Shadow or like Courtisane Festival, or something a bit more regular that also had resources, that brought people in to do talks and screenings, that shared resources, material resources, that developed film, had a library. Something like that.

MJ: Yeah, a Lux Centre type thing. I might bounce to a different area, I'm aware it's getting quite late now so I won't keep you too long. Just talking about Scotland as a frame and as the context in which we work. Is there anything different about working here to working in other places?

LF: I think just everything that we've touched on: the sheer deficit of moving image culture. I see it to be a vacuum. I have very low expectations about seeing anything in Glasgow. You've got the [Glasgow] Short Film Festival. I think what was that you've got the Scottish Government created this mandate for festivals, festivals, festivals, they put all their money into festivals, all the funding went into festivals and was removed from permanent organisations. So now we have this festival culture and what that means is that people parachute in and they don't engage.

Why is that different from Arika? Essentially Kill Your Timid Notion, or Instal, was a festival. Maybe they were part of the problem and part of the solution at the same time. There's a contradiction there. I think festivals, for me, are not the answer. We don't another fucking festival, you know. There's too many festivals and it's about tourism and people siloed away in hotels and they're not engaging with the community here. What we really need are cash injections into the community. We need cheap housing and subsidised studios, a place where we can put things on and we can show things.

In a way the CCA does that but they've got no fucking money so they can't pay for it. You can't do anything ambitious because you can't invite anyone, they can't pay a fee. Everything has become financialised, if that's the word. It seems to me that everything has, you have these extremely rich festivals and then everyone else is just completely poor, it has totally stratified the art scene, I don't think there's anything to be positive about what we've created over the last ten years. I think it's a fucking disaster to be honest. It benefits the people that get salaries, middle-managers and some curators and gallerists but everyone else is struggling.

MJ: Yeah, it's grim. [...] Is that the biggest shift you would see or are there other elements that have changed over that period. [...] Reflecting on the start and end of this period, 2000s to now, with an eye on infrastructure and less yourself, things like festivalisation, are there any other conditions?

LF: Right. I'm drawing a bit of a blank as to how I could talk about the changing landscape of—I mean I think digital, and obviously the Internet and social media is the most significant thing that has happened in the last few years. It has meant that people like Rachel Maclean are incredibly successful. It has created this appetite—obviously it's the tool with which she works with, but more than that, I think that everyone is a photographer now, everyone is a videomaker, everyone can make a video. Everyone makes videos on their phones. In one way that has completely devalued and parodied the language of photography and film and video but for me it's made the distinction even more important or the need for a knowledge of its history and an awareness of the distinction between pure communication and moving image as an artform. That instrumentalisation that has happened through image saturation, the

saturation of social media, really consolidates how important it is to have a history, for it to have a history, to be engaged in a history and a discourse. [...]

MJ: To your mind is there a single significant event or moment in the history of artists' moving image in Scotland—or whatever you want to call it, that seems really pivotal to you?

LF: Tony Conrad giving a talk at the CCA to fifty people. Mason [Leaver-Yap] introducing Jack Smith films in an arcade in Glasgow.

MJ: Do you know roughly when that Tony Conrad talk might have been?

LF: It was part of Kill Your Timid Notion, when Tony came over for Kill Your Timid Notion, so it would have been in 2007 or something like that. What else? [...] It's stuff like that, showing Robert Beavers or John Smith showing at the Friday event. Laurence Wiener coming to Glasgow to show his early videos in the late 1990s, 1999 at Transmission Gallery and giving a talk. Lis Rhodes, *Light Music* at Kill Your Timid Notion, all those things were really pivotal, important moments. And then also just local, things that were more local: the Margaret Tait Award and the films that people made in the first five years of that, going to see them upstairs at the GFT was always such an incredible moment. My peers having solo shows at Tramway, like Stephen Sutcliffe and Duncan Campbell, those were really significant moments just to feel like our work was being supported and recognised.

F. Lesley Keen

Marcus Jack: If we start from the start.

Lesley Keen: So, you know I went to The Glasgow School of Art and that I did animation there, even though it didn't exist, and that was a challenge. The reason that was possible was that the year ahead of us had started this degree course, and up until that point it was a diploma, so they'd started this thing called the associate of The Glasgow School of Art, which you may or may not have heard of. I'm one of the few people who didn't commute it to the Bachelor of Arts; I've still got a piece of paper which says I'm an Associate of the Glasgow School of Art [AGSA]. During first year I'd done some wee animated tests, and I thought 'oh, this is quite interesting' so this drove me to choose the Graphic Design department and the course that was called visual communication. Because the year ahead of us were the first to do this new degree course, we were the lost generation and no one was doing anything with us because they were too busy trying to get the first batch of these people out the door successfully, so we spent a lot of time in the pub not knowing what to do because nobody was minding the farm particularly—I won't name any names—but that was basically how it was.

MJ: So, this was 1972?

LK: When did I go to art school? I graduated in 1975 so I must have gone in 1972. I thought, I'd still do this animation stuff if I can, but I'd started on the AGSA and you had to do two subjects so I did Graphic Design and Silversmithing but then within about a term I realised that I'd actually prefer to do something dynamic. I managed to persuade the head of department that it would be a good idea just to let me go off and do that, the trouble was that nobody was teaching it, so I had to teach myself which wasn't particularly easy; I hadn't much to refer to. So, I did animation in parallel with my Graphic Design course but I didn't know anything at all about animation really by the time I'd graduated. I got a scholarship and I went to Prague and worked in the animation studios there.

MJ: Yes, and I was wondering what drove you there?

LK: Well there was a lot, there were personal reasons as well but let's just keep to the professional ones. I got this British Council scholarship to go there and I was only meant to be there for a year, to go on an animation course but as soon as I arrived there, they told me 'actually, sorry we don't do that animation course anymore.' So, I'm sitting there thinking that I'd just given up a job at the BBC—albeit a summer one—so what am I doing here now? But I knew somebody in the short film studios and I went along them and I said 'look, I've got a grant, can I just come and sit around the studios and learn something?' They said, 'you're not going to learn very much' because the way that they worked at that time you trained as an inbetweener for seven years and then you might be another seven years as a lead animator—there was a seven-year cycle for everything, twenty-one years before you could direct anything. I had to audition to see if I could inbetween and be useful at all, that was interesting. I was given some inbetweening and there are Czech films out there that I've worked on. They said 'you're not going to learn anything at all doing this, why don't you go and make your own film and we'll give you a mentor to help you work your way through it,' I don't know why on Earth they did that but that's what happened and so I made a little graduation film there called *Ondra and the Snow Dragon* [1978]. That one still exists, a copy of it is sitting in the archive, the National Library of Scotland at Kelvingrove [NLSMIA]. They hold all the negatives and positives of all my films.

I came back here—this is the really short version—in 1979. I worked as a freelancer in the local independent film and TV pool for a while but there wasn't a lot of call for graphics and animation. So, I started looking around for ways to fund my own work. The only place at that point where you could get any money for anything vaguely like this was the Scottish Arts Council and then the Scottish Film Council, and later the Scottish Film Production Fund. The Arts Council didn't recognise film as an art form at that point, let alone animation. The only way you could get a grant was if you made a film about another artist. I had a Paul Klee interest going back to my primary school days so I thought, right, *Taking a Line for a Walk* because Paul Klee has all these very advanced theories about movement, so that'll be a good starting point. I got a Scottish Arts Council grant to do a storyboard, just about the same sort of time as Channel 4 was starting, or before Channel 4 started—I'm going to jump sideways for a moment.

Because I was part of this independent film and TV group, such as people on that list [*Glasgow Film Makers*, 1973], just trying to get on with doing what you could and not expire in the process. Jeremy Isaacs [founding chief executive of Channel 4] came up to Glasgow on an evangelising tour and said 'right you guys, you need to get your act together because we're going to have a positive Scottish bias and you can do some of your own projects now. Dig out whatever you've got in your bottom drawer and send it in.' Channel 4 started in 1982, so this must have been the tail end of 1980 into 1981. I had made the storyboard for *Taking a Line for a Walk* but I hadn't managed to take it to the next stage and in the meantime, I'd had funding to do another storyboard for *Orpheus* [and *Eurydice*, 1984]. That film went on to be shown in competition at the Cannes film festival. It was the *Orpheus* storyboard that I sent to Channel 4.

Channel 4 at that point was maybe six people in a small attic office opposite Harrods, these were all the commissioning editors who went on to build Channel 4, but at that point it was just people Jeremy Isaacs thought were a nice little team to help him do it. One of them went on to be my mentor, if you like, in all of this, a woman called Naomi Sargent. Her background was in education, so her remit was actually more to do with education and so I was never part of the animation department—I was always off to one side from the mainstream. I'd sent the *Orpheus* storyboard in with a tape of my Czech film, not knowing anything at all about her background; turned out she was Czech. She always used to tell me, later on, if that had come in any later that she wouldn't have had time to stick the cassette in the machine. She called me down and we started talking, at first about *Orpheus* but for some reason we parked that and moved over to *Taking a Line for a Walk* instead. By this point Channel 4 was starting to become visible, so I went along to the Scottish Arts Council and said, 'if you give me funding support then I can get the rest from Channel 4.' They said 'that's what everybody says,' and I said 'no but I think I can actually do it.' They said 'OK then, prove it.' It was one of those circular things.

The trouble was of course that this was only going to be only 11 minutes, what they used to call interstitial programming, you couldn't really show it as a standalone work. When Naomi Sargent came up to Edinburgh at festival time in 1981 we met to try and work out how we would actually make a programme out of it. I said we could do this, 'we show *Taking a Line for a Walk*, and we could make this documentary about how I made *Taking a Line for a Walk*, and after that we can show *Taking a Line for a Walk* again. So, you can see it, go 'what the ***'s that?', find out how we made it and then watch it again, and that'll be an hour, prime time, eight o'clock in the evening.'

I remember my old boss at the BBC coming up to me after it was broadcast in 1983 and asking, ‘what did you have to do to make that happen?’ Nothing, I just got very enthusiastic about what I was doing in a room with a person who could make it happen and there’s nothing more complicated to it than that. That’s probably why we ended up making *Taking a Line for a Walk* before *Orpheus*. Mike Alexander [Pellicula Films] made the documentary, Bert Eeles was the editor. I was already working on *Taking a Line for a Walk* before Channel 4 went live. It’s quite funny, at that point they were showing all these, what-was-coming on Channel 4—people with castanets, and all sorts of strange, exotic, weird stuff—and I’m sitting there going: ‘I’m going to be on Channel 4!’

Because I had a good working relationship with that particular commissioning editor, she went on to commission everything else I made for Channel 4. When we went on to make *Orpheus* we used the same approach making an accompanying documentary—that’s *Orpheus Through the Ages* [1985], directed by Mike Alexander—with the same programming format again. That went on to win a Scottish TRIC [Television and Radio Industries Club] award in 1985.

MJ: Did you have any association with the Channel 4 television workshops or that movement at all?

LK: No, it was just me and my light box up in the attic, in glorious isolation from everything and anything. So much so that when *Taking a Line for a Walk* appeared at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1983, Richard Demarco said to me, ‘how can you make a film like that with all the rest of what’s going on in the world?’ and I’m going, ‘because I have no idea what’s going on in the rest of the world.’ I just sat there and made it. *Taking a Line for a Walk* was something that I thought of as potentially being art but I had all sorts of people completely misinterpreting it the whole time, constantly. It was also partially generated on a computer, not the way things are computer-generated these days by any stretch of the imagination, there was a lot of hand intervention. The parts created using experimental computer inbetweening were made at Cambridge University on a machine called the Vector General.

MJ: Did you have any sort of dialogue with or awareness of what was happening in London, or other communities which were influencing?

LK: No. [...] I just didn’t have any occasion to come in contact with that scene, except later at animation festivals. When you start making a film as demanding as *Taking a Line for a Walk* you don’t have time to be out and about in circulation. I did occasionally encounter the Aardman boys who were getting commissions from Channel 4 at the same time as me. They were still very much work-for-hire guys at the time. I remember when we were doing the budget for *Ra* we were looking to compare notes on the animation rates per minute on Channel 4 projects; I recall a whisky drinking session at the film festival in Lucca. I don’t think they knew their own names the next day, but I did find out how much they were getting per minute, which was more than the rate per minute for TV animation tends to be these days. Aardman was being commissioned through the animation department. Because I my commissioning editor was from Education we were on different tracks. Everything I did had to have an educational bias on paper even though it didn’t have in reality. That’s why *Taking a Line for a Walk* and *Orpheus* had booklets, because of being in Educational.

MJ: Circulation-wise, that would have gone out via broadcast and then film festivals, and found itself in the LUX collection.

LK: I don't know where they found it from to be honest, you'd have to ask them.

MJ: So that was its life cycle.

LK: During the making of the documentary for *Orpheus*, this is where *Invocation* came from, to explain a complicated Greek creation myth. The version you've seen probably doesn't have the narrator, you could look at it and say 'what in the hell is that about.' It was shot on 16mm on a short end that Mike [Alexander] gave me. Donald [Holwill] was the rostrum cameraman. Doing multiple passes on 16mm is like woah, I could tell you horror stories about multiple passes. You never could predict what you would get till you got it back from the labs.

Our great thing used to be the Red Star Parcel moment, and I have to share that because it's a thing that has gone now: you would do your shoot, and you would go down to Central Station and put it into the Red Star to go to London to be picked up by the lab and then you wait for it to come back, usually overnight, and you'd tear it open with shaking hands to see what was in the lab report. I remember with *Invocation* they said, 'oh, it's fuzzy down one side of the screen,' in a bit where there's a mirror image and one side is softer than the other—which we'd achieved with a bit of Vaseline over a piece of plastic—so when we actually got it back we found that the short end—you know these bags you have which look like somebody's jumper with no neck hole—you know when you actually take a film and you put it into a cartridge, real old tech stuff before it goes onto the rostrum—Mike said, 'I haven't got a budget for this part so just shoot it on a short end,' and I don't know where he'd been shooting but when he'd got it back, on one particular frame—we'd only cut one frame out, but you have to remember that all of these had a shooting ratio of almost 1:1—and at that one, just at some critical point, before we'd started on the titles or end credits, there was an embedded fly—a beautiful image of this fly, multi-coloured, x-ray kind of image. Yeah, we didn't have any money to do anything. That was shot on 16mm and the whole purpose of it was to explain this Greek creation myth. [...]

MJ: Did the mythology thing come from a directive in the commission?

LK: No, the mythology thing is me. That goes back, way back. That's the kind of thing where you would have, what I would call, a non-narrative structure, but it's telling a story, just not in the conventional way that we understand an arc of a story. Using animation to tell something mythological like that is a good match.

MJ: Could you speak a bit more about the images in that film and how they're made? Is there a computer involved?

LK: No. People used to think it was made on a computer but it wasn't. Basically what it is—it's the technique we went on to use in *Ra*, painting with light by drilling lots of holes in black paper—when it's not made up of dots, it's negatives, so you trace it with black ink on a cell and then make a contact negative, once you've got that, you line it back up to the positive using an animation peg bar as tightly aligned as possible so that the drawings doesn't wobble about too much. A contact negative is full of little pin holes from dust getting into the process and to avoid sparkle you have to spot all of these out, so we developed a technique of using screen printing masking fluid and black tape—I've still got all the artwork we made this way. The artwork started as pencil drawings, then was traced as line art with registration marks to help realign later. We worked with a regular printing company who made the contact negatives. After the negs are all lined up using the positives and masked to remove

pin holes the artwork is shot a frame at a time on a backlit rostrum bed with coloured gel in front of the lens. Simple as that. It's not really that complicated, just fiddly to get the alignment right.

MJ: Are all the colours are produced by gels?

LK: It's all black and white artwork except there are some top lit parts which you can see when the line is multicoloured—that's the giveaway that it's top lit, if it doesn't glow it's conventional cell paint. They tell me this light show technique best enjoyed with taking substances but I wouldn't know, I've never indulged. Nobody believes that, but it's true.

MJ: I did wonder about the psychedelic element.

LK: With that amount of psychedelia in my head, why would I need extra chemicals. I've got a light show all of my own.

MJ: These happened under Persistent Vision, and that was your own production company. Was that a solo practice?

LK: It was me with a group of regular collaborators who would come in when we got a commission. It was very feast and famine. On shorter cycles of feast and famine perhaps than these days. I'm still in the animation industry which you may or may not be aware of, but I'm in a totally different part of the forest, where Winnie the Pooh would never go. That's why I'm a shadow of my former self, and that would be a different story which I can't tell today because it's still under wraps but there's a big production just about to land in Scotland, a big 52-part TV series for kids that I'm producing. I've been on that role for nine years. That just tells you how long raising a project on that scale takes. I don't consider part of my own work, that's separate. That is based on someone else's intellectual property so it's not personal.

MJ: So, the Persistent Vision stuff is very much you?

LK: It was me working with Donald Holwill [animator and rostrum cameraman] and a fellow GSA graduate in graphic design called Alan Mason, who still teaches animation at the Edinburgh College of Art. There were other people who came in and out as artwork assistants. Donald animated part of *Taking a Line for a Walk* and did all the camerawork until we did *Ra*, when we started working with Mike Campbell who had the specialised computerised rostrum facilities needed to achieve the multiple exposure techniques.

MJ: I guess I'm interested in the kind of softer idea of the context for this work and whether that was artistic or filmic or somewhere in between. If these things were being shown on Channel 4, whether it's just for broadcast, or where the 'home' for this work was?

LK: There wasn't a home, and in fact that was the problem. If you read the *Taking a Line for a Walk* brochure you'll probably see that the main problem was that the art establishment didn't regard animation as an art form—they were like, 'ooh cartoons'—and the animation fraternity looked at what I did and were like 'what the f—, what's that? It's not cartoons.' I kept on saying it's an animated film not a cartoon; the idea was that you could use animation to create something that couldn't be made in any other way. You could explore concepts that could only be visualised in that medium in the days before digital image processing became accessible. I did my first computer assisted animation in 1975, so I've been on that road for a

long time. The results weren't that good in those early days. This was at Imperial College London with a guy called Stan Hayward who worked with Bob Godfrey. These are legendary names now. If you persist long enough you end up having rubbed shoulders with people whose names became known.

This is something that's maybe a little personal but when I go back to try and work out why I ended up on the animation path I seem to remember a dream, I think I might have been at art school or even still at school—not as in *I have a dream*, but an actual dream where I was in a gallery and I was looking at a painting and it came to life and started moving, something about a forest and white horse. I don't remember too much about that but the whole idea was that you could actually make a moving composition inside a picture frame and believe me, I played about with that idea for many, many years and it's really difficult because it has no focal point and other things I won't bore you with.

Because of the visual arts environment of the time, I couldn't have said 'I am a video artist' because that didn't exist. You had to find a way of doing something inside the existing structures. Channel 4 had a very open mind at the beginning because they wanted to do something different and they encouraged people who didn't know how to produce, really. We all started off with our first contract was like twelve pages long probably but by the time we'd started doing *Ra* contracts had become like *War and Peace*. Effectively when Jeremy Isaacs left, the original Channel 4 era was over [1987]. It was a golden period where there was money to experiment with things and nobody knew to tell you not to do it, because the people who were commissioning us knew even less about it than we did.

You got this situation where there were lots and lots of tiny companies who couldn't really sustain themselves very easily, especially up here, before the rise of the 'super-indies' who aggregated smaller companies though not so much in the animation sector. I think Persistent Vision was probably the first animation presence, although there were individuals doing educational things, there was no studio system here, so we had to make everything up as we went along and see how we did. There happened to be a 35mm rostrum camera here and so that was something, but when I was a student I did all my films on 16mm at Strathclyde University because that was the only place where there was an accessible rostrum camera then. The art school had a wind up Bolex, Super 8 I think.

MJ: I guess maybe I could ask you to talk a bit more about Scotland and its resources, and how you felt able or unable to work here throughout various points?

LK: I'd have to say that the Channel 4 years weren't completely easy because nothing was ever guaranteed. You'd get a commission, and when you pitched for another it was never sure that you were going to get it. There were periods that were very sparse, with a lot of uncertainty, but I had this theory that if I made a longer film that's how we would get people's attention, that's how we would create a landmark. It didn't work out like that at all. I'll tell you the story of what happened to *Ra*—which I was telling last year at South by Southwest [SXSW, Austin, United States] after they'd rediscovered it having been in oblivion for twenty-nine years. We're having a screening at the Third Eye Centre [CCA Glasgow] at Weird Weekend, coming up in September—that'll be a bit of fun. You can install the twenty-foot goddesses, you've got the height for it, the ones that were made for the event at the Tramway.

MJ: Why Tramway? That's interesting.

[...] LK: This is how that happened. I was in the middle of making *Ra*, this is 1988, and I went to see the *Mahabharata* [dir. Peter Brook] which was stunning, gives me goose bumps now thinking about it—the nine-hour version. You couldn't do it now because they've re-engineered the Tramway and it doesn't have that big space any more. When you go in it's on the left, they've got it split into different areas now, but it was one big space at that point.

MJ: A cinema space?

LK: It wasn't a cinema space, but we'll come to that as well. This was 1988 and there were various people like Paddy Higson and not quite that same list of local filmmakers from the 1970s but people like that—this is how *Burrellesque* [1990] got made because basically there was supposed to be a film for the Year of Culture where all the local film people would make a compilation and everyone was going to have a five minute slot, everyone said 'yours is probably the only part that's ever going to get made' which is exactly what happened. So that's how *Burrellesque* came to happen.

Anyway, things were building up for the Year of Culture and I went along to a meeting at the city chambers where an events organising committee was saying they were open to hearing our ideas about what we'd like to do. In those days I used to get women coming up to me, sometimes quite aggressively, asking why I wasn't making women's films, the people that Jo Brand used to make fun of, bovver boots and dungarees, they weren't all like that but I had some saying 'you're a traitor to the cause' and that sort of thing. Political expression was important to them but I wouldn't have known where to start. This was a presentation to people from a very left-wing arts scene, being given an open invitation to present ideas on what they really wanted to do. Other people in the room seemed to be looking for guidelines on what would be supported, so they could develop and submit it. We were given the brief to go away and dream our biggest dream, come back and tell us what it is. I remember thinking *why not*.

I wrote to them and said 'at the Tramway, in the same space as the *Mahabharata*, we'll build a cinema inside it, we'll have an exhibition,' and that's what happened. I was at the point where I knew that 1990 was going to hit and *Ra* would be finished, as I was halfway through making it. I thought we'll have this big Egyptian installation—and I've still got the doorway and framed artwork that was made for that, cluttering up my lower stairwell, plus twenty-foot goddesses that were on either side. We covered the floor in the sand from the *Mahabharata* and built a Dolby surround sound projection set up.

MJ: Was this a one-off screening event?

LK: It went on for a week. There's a leaflet in there which tells you what happened, the screening times, and there's a poster on the back of it.

MJ: To my knowledge *Ra* was the first feature film directed by a Scottish woman.

LK: This is the first animated feature ever made in Scotland.

MJ: Though not even animated, it's the first any format feature film directed by a woman.

LK: Is that right?

MJ: Margaret Tait made *Blue Black Permanent* in 1992.

LK: That's right, I was going to say. A friend of mine worked on that.

MJ: So, I think you were before, which is an incredible credit. Quite remarkable.

LK: Luckily, I wasn't looking over my shoulder to say I must be the first person to row the Atlantic wearing a sombrero or something. We didn't think that. Not in our mind at all. As far as I was concerned I'm a person-ist, not a feminist. I'm just a person, happen to be a female but I'm a person and I just get on with doing things and maybe slightly from a female perspective but I am not out there going 'I am woman, I must prove to you that...' I find it quite interesting because my daughters are quite feminist, especially the one who lives in America, a Professor of Classics. She's really got the problem that certain colleagues don't give her the right acknowledgement because she's—still—a female academic in a male world. I look at that and go, 'oh for ***'s sake.' I mean I've never put up with it, yes, I worked at the BBC at the point where Jimmy Saville was getting away with what he was doing, and I have my own stories. We've all experienced all of this Harvey Weinstein stuff, of course and BBC culture in the 1970s was riddled with it. There was an expectation that you had to sleep with a producer to get an opportunity to work on certain programmes and I'm going, 'right, OK, I don't think so, somehow.'

MJ: Even looking at that [1973] screening list, everyone there is a man, except for you.

LK: I never noticed it at the time.

MJ: It didn't feel like a boys' club or that things happened behind closed doors?

LK: I'm maybe just such a maverick that I don't notice those things. My mother was from the that generation where when you got married, you gave up your job, you didn't know what your husband earned and you had to have his tea on the table; I was supposed to grow up and marry a bank manager and amuse myself by dabbling in watercolours at the weekend or whatever. But then the 1960s happened, a good time for me I suppose. I remember reading all the feminist literature in the 1970s like *The Female Eunuch* and all that kind of stuff, but I didn't really appreciate what the course correction was until much later—you look back and you go 'oh, now I understand what's going on,' but at the time you don't think about it because it's just how things are.

MJ: Do you think being in Scotland involves being cut off from these conversations?

LK: I might be the wrong person to ask. When you're making stuff like that, you're living in such a bubble, such an artificial existence, in order to get things done you really have to cut yourself off from everything. That's the sort of thing you probably notice if you're in a group of people travelling together but that's not what this discipline is about. I wouldn't presume to know whether it's any worse or any better here. What we do know is that there has traditionally been a metropolitan bias which is now being thoroughly challenged; on the project that I'm producing now we are part of an Ofcom quota where to qualify the majority of the production talent has to be based outside the M25—a very conscious bias in the opposite direction.

There was a time when I might have had a problem being a female producer but now no-one would dare question that, now I'm part of my own diversity crew because I'm of a certain age and gender. It was much worse in the games industry, that's where I really felt it because I was the wrong age, wrong gender, and I didn't code. So, I have experienced this, but I'm

like, ‘I’ve floated a company, what did you do before breakfast?’ If you really want to have a pissing competition then we can have one, but I’m not interested really. I don’t like to have to justify myself, you shouldn’t be doing that.

MJ: To go back to your biography, *Persistent Vision* stopped in 1999 and is that when you moved into digital?

LK: It was wound up in 1999, but I had already been working in digital since the early 1990s. We were around six months from completing *Ra* when my commissioning editor was given her jotters. So, we were meant to do all sorts of promotions, it was going to be big, it was going to have coffee table books and all sorts. Then my commissioning editor came back from lunch one day and found the contents of her desk packed into a cardboard box. But what she had done was—and this is where Mike Bolland comes back into the story, at that point he had been given custodial powers over *Ra* to see it finished and the rest of the budget had been earmarked so I could keep going after she’d left but I didn’t have a commissioning editor anymore and so once I’d delivered it—my commissioning editor, because of being in Education, had access to prime slots, and Clare Kitson [Commissioning Editor of Animation, Channel 4] didn’t.

MJ: She took over?

LK: She inherited responsibility for finding a slot. After working on it for six years—and this was going to make a big hole in the world and we were going to show people—they split it into three parts and broadcast it over three consecutive Sundays at three o’clock in the afternoon and then it died, lost without a trace.

MJ: That’s heart-breaking.

LK: It was to be frank. The people at SXSW were very sweet, they thought of me as being some kind of strange, lost genius from God knows where. Scotland has tall poppy syndrome, that’s the thing that I would have to say that you’re not allowed to stick out from the crowd. ‘Who do you think you are going out there and jumping around?’ You have to go away somewhere else, be famous and then come back, like Alan Cumming or whatever. So yeah, it was distressing but I had a production fee at the end so I had a little time to work out what next. Clare Kitson commissioned *Burrellesque* because it was the Year of Culture and she didn’t have to do the whole budget because I’d got local money for it and after that she wanted to diversify and let other people get a slice of the opportunity, as I’d had a good run of eight years and it was time to give someone else a chance.

There wasn’t this continuity that I’d had with this previous commissioning editor, so I said right, I’m going to buy a computer and learn how to make all this stuff without a budget, we’ll replicate everything that we did before on film. We’re going to do it computer assisted now. This is 1990, 1991 I got a Mac IIfx, cost me £12,000 then and it could do pretty much nothing. It wasn’t quite a sit-up-and-beg, the video handling part of it was there so it could process in 32-bits. The reason I went down that path was because when I made *Taking a Line for a Walk* partly on the Vector General at Cambridge University someone at Glasgow University’s Computer Science department saw the documentary about *Taking a Line for a Walk* and invited me to come in and talk to them; they were wanting to build an animation system and were looking for an expert user to collaborate with and I’d already had some exposure to the coding environment. I have been an honorary research fellow at Glasgow University ever since—for life—not that anyone there actually knows it anymore, but I still

have a piece of paper to prove it. I spent quite a bit of time working closely with Dr John Patterson, who became a lifelong influence on my approach to digital media. In terms of getting a workable animation system I could see that it was either going to take forever or never happen. We did explore if it would be possible to make *Ra* on a computer but I could see that the technology was just not going to be there. I went off and made *Ra* then came back, and by that time the Iifx had come to the market, which was the start of digital tools becoming available to creatives. It couldn't do the job yet but it was the start for developing the techniques that are common today.

MJ: Did you have any relationship with the Electronic Imaging department in Dundee, were you aware of them?

LK: Oh yeah. I got a job offer from them once in 1999. They seemed keen for me to join them, but I couldn't quite establish what my role might be. They were still feeling their way at that stage. I thought maybe at some future point when they could define what they wanted me to do we could talk again, but I didn't feel at the time that I could come in and help define all of that. That wasn't the thing for me. I've been aware of them but never had any true interaction.

I did teach at the art school here [GSA] as a visiting lecturer in the Graphic Design department and there was a point in 1984/85 where the Scottish Education Department had bought a Quantel Paintbox and it was going in rotation around all the art schools in Scotland. When it came to the Glasgow School of Art, I was the only person who had a vague idea of how to use something like that. I was trying to teach students how to use electronic means of expression and they didn't like this [drawing mediated electronically]. I have been drawing like this for years. They found that dislocation of the drawing process really difficult because they weren't making a mark on a piece of paper, it was quite fascinating watching people struggling with the idea that you could disassociate expressing what's in your head from the piece of paper you're making the mark on.

I didn't have any problem with that because *Ra* always had to be played in my head and the way that we'd made the artwork didn't look like anything that was on screen, it was a stage towards it, with multiple exposures and dope sheets and all sorts of intermediary processes. You can't point a camera at what *Ra* looks like and capture it, you have to build it up layer by layer. It's very cerebral. That was a problem for some of the students who were getting their inspiration through the interaction with the medium. The medium can do almost anything once mastered, but you're stuck with tools that a computer scientist has built for you, and those were the days before there was much interaction between computing science and the creative end user. Myself and my colleagues were trying to build a bridge between the computing science department and the art school so there could be a joint course—way ahead of our time in 1985.

MJ: That would be the same time that the Environment Art course started which lead to all these video art practitioners. It sounds like you were in a totally different sphere?

LK: Yeah, it was promoting digital before its time. By the time I'd come out the other end of *Ra*, I thought right let's see if we can now get a computer and build a workable production pathway and that was the Iifx. However, it just wasn't up to the task yet, either in hardware or software, or the necessary peripherals to produce broadcast quality output. In trying to build that datapath I ended up being seduced into interactive media development instead. Around then—in 1991—I got an opportunity to work on a CD-i project. This was a Philips

technology which held out the promise of interactive video entertainment based on the MPEG-1 format with support for branching and convergent script development. We got a commission to do title development for Philips who then decided to walk away from CD-i and that was a very difficult phase because we'd already invested a lot of money into the kit. We very nearly went out of business before switching to CD-ROM with the help of investment and a four-title deal from Oxford University Press. This led to my building up a multimedia company which then floated, and became a games company. Effectively that was still animation but with a different grammar.

MJ: What year was this?

LK: That was 1993. That was Inner Workings. We incorporated a lot of hand-crafted animation as part of interactive picture books for OUP, then we built a real-time games engine on what became the Xbox platform, before Xbox, and prepared to go into the arcade market with Microsoft. This is a totally different part of the forest, right. It doesn't give you continuity because then there was a big long gap and I started doing my experimental video work. In the meantime, I went to Belgium to consult with a company working on an animation system that was very similar to the one we'd been trying to build at Glasgow Uni in the 1980s. Working on that project brought me to where I am now, back producing animation—not using the Belgian platform however.

These wide pieces, are all done in Photoshop, which I have been using now since 1990. I have literally tens of thousands of images in that library. At some point I'd quite like to create a permanent installation, a completely immersive environment, where people can be inside those pieces because when you're inside it really is very trippy.

MJ: I guess this moves more into New Media culture.

LK: I don't know why I started making the 10k series so wide like that. The editor is Neil Castell who helped me put this whole thing together. It's super complicated. I would like to make it interactive, although if you were inside it, you'd probably have to take a deep breath. Any more development and experimentation will have to wait until I've got the time to go back and dedicate to it. I did those [postcard stills] in 2014. It's purely digital, it starts off life as vector images and is layered up and recomposed, some pieces in the series so far have animation embedded in them and others don't.

MJ: Where is the home for these, where will these exist?

LK: This is it. I mean it should exist in some kind of environment, once you can build a graphene environment, a graphene tent, really super thin. This is to do with the fact that the screen holding the image would vanish because graphene is only one molecule thick, so the images can float in space on this invisible screen, then it would be destined to be outdoors in an environment, in a thin place. There's an enormous number of images there. We started calling it the 10K project because I thought I was going to make 10,000 images that way, past 100,000 now. It's not machine interpolated, it's all hand done on Photoshop on the basis of underlying images that have come from a vector programme. There's a whole website with some of this stuff [10k-project.com]. I have worked with various different composers, including Tom Rennie, the composer on *Ra*. Effectively the idea is that this is like a hypnotic backdrop for a music performance if you like to think of it that way.

MJ: I guess, and this might be a simple question to answer, but have you returned to previous work? I know you mentioned that *Invocation* had a different soundtrack without a narration; have these been returned to later? The music sounds very contemporary.

LK: No, the music is from the time. What happened last year was that they approached me for SXSW and said they're going to have live musicians, I'm wondering how that's going to work with the narration. It blew my head off. They didn't want to listen to Tom's music too much because the more they listened the more they would get overly influenced by it, very 1980s, done the hard way. It sounds maybe like modern digital music but it was actually done on an old Revox in a cottage in the middle of Ayrshire. Now everyone's got this whole thing about it being neon, 1980s, 'oh look it's academy format; oh, it's on 35mm.' It's also weird, allegedly. It sat beautifully in the context of where SXSW was last year and these musicians were brilliant. Three different musicians were brought in because it falls into three parts. At some point they're going to run it again and it's going to be in various places in the States and put these live performances up against it again. We found most of the original Tom Rennie music track this year [2019] but not all resurfaced, not quite enough—we haven't got the music alone for part one. A local company retrieved it off a ¼ inch, for which they had to bake it first.

MJ: Yes, sticky shed?

LK: Yes! Sticky shed. That was a new one on me. I had visions of someone in the shed at the bottom of their garden. But no, not that kind of shed. There's a vast amount of material and sometimes I do go back and resample stuff. The place to see that is on Facebook, I've got a whole bit on that, the *Ra* stuff on Facebook. I have done it so that I'm sampling bits of the original artwork but I've merged it with 10k-project kind of approach so it really is super digital, super intangible. Some people found *Ra* very inaccessible at the time because it's so intangible, what bothered them was that they couldn't see my fingerprints on it—but if you could the illusion would drop immediately. They used to ask me 'how many drawings did it take to make this?' and then it became 'which computer did you use?' and at SXSW people said 'what computer software did you use?' You do realise the film's thirty years old, what on Earth do you think I could have used then? It just didn't exist.

MJ: In terms of the thematic and content of these works, what was informing your thinking? Were you interested in any sort of theory or any strand of film scholarship?

LK: People have asked me to tell them what I have been influenced by and I have to find something similar to what I was doing and tell them it was that. If there was an influence this wasn't particularly conscious. The National Film Board of Canada used to do some really interesting things and I used to go to the Ottawa Film Festival, so I saw some of the experimental stuff that they did. When we went to film festivals in the 1970s and maybe into the 1980s, there was that kind of state subsidy of stuff, in Zagreb particularly and with the NFB. You're going to ask me if I met—

MJ: Norman McLaren?

LK: Yes, I have. I thought that would come up. There's a film which was made by putting clay, plasticine clay, on to the platter glass, back-lighting it and the light bits are where the clay is very thin. It's like a soft edge version of what I did which was done by drilling holes

in a piece of paper with a craft drill. If you thought that was a secret, it's not. If you want to go and try it, it'll drive you nuts.

MJ: Did you have any back and forth with Norman McLaren?

LK: No, the thing was that you weren't allowed to meet him because he was very frail at that point, this was 1979 or sometime around there. They said you should meet him because he's Scottish and you both went to The Glasgow School of Art, and lots of people say I was influenced by him but that absolutely isn't true. It may look like it because my work uses coloured lines as well but absolutely not. That's a theory I have heard a lot which I would like to correct. I wanted to meet him but the English-speaking part of the NFB was very protective and they didn't allow him to meet with anyone, so I went through the French back door and got one of the French filmmakers to introduce me to him. It was brief, five minutes if that, but at least I can say I shook the hand. I don't think he was particularly bothered about what was going on in Scotland, it wasn't like 'oh, you're from the old country.' He was very poorly at that point which is why they were so protective of his time.

MJ: Yes, he's definitely been repatriated by history.

LK: Let's not be too coy about it. It's exactly the same thing that they did to poor old Mackintosh. Rennie Mackintosh was not any kind of hero in his own lunchtime here and all of a sudden, it's retrospectively 'look at our great guy.' That happens all the time.

MJ: Yes, but often that's related to money. I've just finished coordinating the Margaret Tait 100 centenary project which is doing the exact same thing, but it's about whether there's a goodness and a value in that, which I think there is.

LK: Iain Gardner sorted out the hundred-year thing for McLaren in 2014 and I was part of that. Lots of people were standing up and saying things about McLaren but the minute they came off the stage they admitted they felt obliged to say things they didn't really believe. Len Lye's stuff is much better in my view. I'm sorry, you're recording this but it's true if you want to look at Lye's stuff. McLaren's is overly controlled to me.

MJ: In terms of your exposure to this stuff, were you aware of this at art school or later? When did you start to encounter this animation history?

LK: There was a programme—in the 1960s John Grierson had a programme on STV called *This Wonderful World* [1957–1965] or something of that ilk and he used to show animated things from Eastern Europe, that's probably where the rot set in. I remember seeing weird things about bottles, thinking 'what is that?'

MJ: You were quite young?

LK: Yes, I was born in 1953, I'm not going to make any bones about it. I must have been about 10 when I saw that.

MJ: Was that an influence on your decision to go to Prague?

LK: No. We have to leave that story on one side because it becomes very big and complicated and isn't really relevant to any of this stuff but when I was there, this was an interesting era because we were behind the Iron Curtain so we had to think about what we can get past the censors. The state was paying for these experimental things which were

actually quite anti-communist, but the people who were signing off on it had the wool pulled, comprehensively, over their eyes and didn't know what they were paying for shall we say.

There were some quite interesting techniques that I saw from the puppet studios, but I was up in the animation studios where hand-drawn animation was done. Those were interesting days. That's where I really learned my craft. I went from doing kids' stuff to *Taking a Line for a Walk* in one leap. I have got plenty of storyboards and samples of things which are me trying to still do kids' stuff but I ended up doing the experimental stuff instead. How I got from one to another is anyone's guess. You can't always work it out, most things are not intentional, most things are completely and utterly accidental. If I hadn't made that Czech film and sent it in to Channel 4 at the point when there was a Czech lady who was intrigued enough to give me an opportunity—it's all accidental.

MJ: Happy accidents.

LK: If anyone says that they had a life that they'd planned exactly, then you'd have to ask them whether they'd like to step this way because the doctor will give them something to take the edge off.

G. Kim Knowles

Marcus Jack: First of all, I was wondering if you could walk me through your professional career, particularly in relation to experimental film or artists' moving image—however you want to cut up that terminology—maybe starting around university?

Kim Knowles: It advances in fairly clear phases for me actually. My interest in experimental film started when I was doing my MSc at Edinburgh University, I did an MSc in European Film Studies and as part of that we had maybe one session on avant-garde cinema, early avant-garde film. The professor who was running that scheme at the time was really quite heavily into Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* and disproving it in some way. He gathered around him a group of people who were interested in early avant-garde film and that first session of screenings of avant-garde film triggered my interest.

Up until that point my understanding of film was mostly narrative based, I hadn't really been exposed to experimental film in my undergraduate degree. It was kind of a revelation for me, a real turning point and it stays with me as a landmark in my life, that one session, just going, 'wow.' I recognise it in my students now when I teach experimental film, they're like, 'wow,' mind blown that this could even exist. It has actually helped me to understand where experimental film, avant-garde film is positioned more generally in film culture and in the minds of people. For most people it doesn't, can't even exist. For most people it's not that it's something they're aware of but never actually encountered, it's something that they just can't even imagine the existence of. I guess that was my position at the time.

That exposure really changed me as a person, not just in terms of my career, and then everything I did in my MSc from that point on was related to early avant-garde film and then I did my PhD in 1920s avant-garde film, I wrote my thesis on Man Ray. I was really compelled by Man Ray as a person and how he never really fit; he sort of fit everything and yet nothing at the same time and the way that his films create a dialogue between all kinds of different art forms, it was like a refusal to be pigeonholed. My thesis in many ways was driven by that interest in him, as an artist, rather than necessarily just his films.

MJ: And was this also at [the University of] Edinburgh?

KK: That's right. What also I would say was a landmark thing in my life was the fact that for various reasons I decided that I wanted to go and live in Paris. A lot of the people that I was studying with on the Masters—I was quite young then, I was only in my twenties and I was surrounded by people who spoke different languages and I was really compelled by that, being surrounded by all these people from different countries who were speaking German, French, Greek and I just thought, 'wow.' It's kind of a bit of a cliché but while I was studying my undergrad I'd always been interested in the French New Wave and really attracted to that way of life. I fantasised about living in France and speaking French which is exactly what I did whilst I was doing my PhD. While I was writing my PhD, I didn't actually live in Edinburgh for most of it, I went and lived in France and stayed there for about four and a half years. It was only meant to be a short stay but I ended up not coming back.

MJ: Related to that, as well as a pulling force, did you feel a sense of pushing out of Scotland, or that you had to leave?

KK: No. I don't think it was related to that at all. I don't remember feeling like, 'I need to get out of the UK.' Which is what would be driving it now, if I went to live in France now I'd be like, 'get me out of this country.' I really felt that I needed to grow as a person. It was really the master's that I did, it was formative for me in that respect. I really knew that I needed to expand my horizons a bit. I'd lived in the States for a few months while I was doing my undergrad but I felt like I needed to develop as person and experience other things. I was really quite driven by this idea of just learning another language so it wasn't really like 'I need to get away,' I needed to develop as an individual.

The more I read about Paris in the 1920s and Man Ray going there from New York and meeting Marcel Duchamp, being involved with the Dada group and the Surrealist group, it was just like with the French New Wave, I was really compelled by that history and that idea of all these artists meeting together in the Quartier Latin, that kind of intellectual and artistic melting pot of people and I just wanted to experience it or be part of it in a way. I felt like—when I went there I was reading Man Ray's autobiography—my level of French was probably about the same as his at the time he went so I totally related to it. I felt like I was following him in some way and that I needed to be in Paris in order to do this work. A lot of my thesis—I wrote it in the National Library in Paris and I wrote some of it in the Forum des Images—it's kind of all related to particular material spaces. I used to live quite close to the Municipal Library, which had a focus on photography, so spent a lot of time there as well. Those places, for me they're in the book—someone reading it obviously wouldn't know that but it was a really important time in my life.

During that time, I got to see a lot of stuff. My education in experimental film was pretty limited to that 1920s period, and then mapping that was all about the artistic mapping: Dada, Surrealism, Cubism. So, my knowledge of experimental film post-1920s was pretty restricted but I started going to lots of screenings, at the Centre Pompidou, at the Forum des Images, the Light Cone distribution screenings, I started to attend those, and I was seeing a lot of stuff, and reading a lot as well. I knew that once I'd finished my PhD I wasn't going to continue working on the 1920s. I just read a lot and watched a lot.

MJ: Do you think that immersion, with all the screening activity going on, was that unique to the context of Paris or was that something you were able to access before in Scotland?

KK: No, so exactly. Basically, what was happening was that I was in a relationship with someone who was French and coming to Paris quite a lot but based in Edinburgh. We were alternating Paris and Edinburgh and so I was coming back to Edinburgh quite a lot and had a really strong connection. I was going to the Edinburgh Film Festival every year. I worked as an usher and then on the box office at the Edinburgh Film Festival—before I went to Paris—that was always a place that I returned to. I started to attend the experimental screenings, I think for a while it was called *Persistence of Vision*. For a couple of years it was curated by Louis Benassi. I've got notes somewhere. In the early 2000s it was curated for two years be Louis Benassi and someone else, they called it *Persistence of Vision*. Then when Shane Danielsen came on board he renamed it *Black Box* and started to curated it himself. Because I was developing this general fascination with experimental film beyond the 1920s, I was just watching everything. Went to Kill Your Timid Notion screenings in Dundee.

MJ: Could you place a year on this period?

KK: Well yeah, I can pretty much. I'd say that it was probably between 2004 and 2007 because in 2006 I finished my PhD, 2007 I came back to Edinburgh. I was teaching on the MSc programme that I'd studied on. I don't know when I went to Kill Your Timid Notion. In 2006/2007 I looked at the *Black Box* section and was just like, 'it's just like... a mixture of all kinds of stuff that doesn't quite fit the main programme, who's doing this.' By that point Shane had left and Hannah McGill was Artistic Director of the Edinburgh Film Festival, and Diane Henderson was the Deputy Artistic Director and I'd known Diane because we'd worked together on the box office when I was in my early 20s. She was my boss then. I think I emailed Hannah with Diane copied and said, 'do you want some kind of help with your experimental strand.'

Perhaps I'm jumping ahead there actually. What happened was: I came back to Edinburgh, I took up a part time job covering for someone who was on research leave at Edinburgh—no, it wasn't part time, it was full time but fixed term. I became aware of this pot of money, the Research Development Fund or something, that could allow anyone to apply and develop a project. And so, I applied to put on an experimental film festival because I really thought at the time—what was happening was that I'd finished my PhD and was just absorbing more and more stuff in Paris, I came back from Paris and I went, 'ok, where do I see all this stuff now? Where is it happening? Maybe I can just make it happen, myself' in quite an arrogant way because I had absolutely no experience of organising screenings or budgeting and running festivals. I just put together this funding application, I got the money and that became Diversions Film Festival.

I think it was around the same time, the same year, that I wrote that email to Hannah and Diane saying, 'you probably could do with someone.' They said, 'ok, what can you do.' And I said, 'I don't know.' I really didn't know actually but that's how I got involved with Edinburgh and that's what, in a way, stimulated that setting up of Diversions Film Festival. It was basically having had this really vibrant experimental film—or just generally film—culture in Paris. Coming back and feeling... oh. It's probably useful to say that I didn't want to come back any way. I never wanted to come back. I would have stayed there probably forever if I could but the thing is that it's quite hard to get an academic job in France if you've gone through a different education system. So, my PhD wouldn't really have been enough to get me an academic job in France and its system is quite difficult to negotiate if you're not French. So, I came back kind of against my will—cried for weeks at the thought of coming back to the UK, not necessarily Scotland because I'd kind of adopted Scotland as where I felt that I belonged. But then I'd got a stronger sense of belonging in Paris. The return to the UK was quite difficult and I think probably in my head one of the things that would make that return easier would be putting on screenings and things.

MJ: So, was Diversions your first curatorial, organising activity?

KK: Yeah, it was. Actually, because I had no experience, once I got money I kind of panicked. [...] I thought, 'oh, shit,' I don't really know how to organise a festival. I'm good at writing stuff on paper and going 'this is what I'm going to do' and making it sound good. I made it sound good enough for them to give me the money but then after that initial 'yay, I got the money,' I thought 'oh no, now I need to actually do this thing.' And so, I actually brought on board—I kind of curated a set of curators—so I brought on board Al Rees, David Curtis, Nicky Hamlyn, Peter Rose from the US, Frédérique Dévaux from France. I did two versions you see, I did it in 2008 and 2009, so it's possible I'll get mixed up between the two of them. Anyway, basically I just had everyone else—Pip Chodorov, did I say Pip Chodorov? I just brought together all the people that I knew and respected and paid for them to do the

curating, so I didn't actually curate very much of it, I just oversaw the organisation of it. I probably did a similar kind of thing in the second year.

MJ: There are quite a few London-based names there. I wonder if you have anything to say about that and whether there was a dearth of people in Scotland?

KK: The only reason for that was really that those were the people that I—I mean I think it's fair to say that my network of contacts was quite limited then, so this was like 2008, or let's say I was organising it in 2007. I'd only just finished my PhD, I'd been in France for a long time so I wasn't really connected with any scene to be honest because I'd been for so long, head-down focusing on my PhD. I'd met, in Paris, Frédérique Dévaux; I'd met Pip Chodorov. And I'd met, at a conference, people like David Curtis, Nicky Hamlyn, Al Rees, I'd met them all because they came to Edinburgh for a conference on the avant-garde in like 2006 or something. But I would say that yeah, there probably is, and there always has been for me, a lack of people.

You don't really have the equivalent—and I'm sure people would prove me wrong on this—but to me Scotland doesn't have an equivalent set of people as Pip Chodorov, Nicky Hamlyn. And LUX Scotland didn't exist then obviously. I knew Luke Fowler, and Matt Hulse, I think was involved in the festival in the second year. Luke had been involved in the first year I think and Matt was involved in the second year. But to my knowledge there weren't really any experimental curators or scholars. Did I know Bryony and Barry [Arika] then, I'm not sure? But I gravitated towards the networks that I knew and those networks were London-based, yeah, it's true. I mean in the second year, Matt Lloyd, Matthew Lloyd who programmes the Glasgow Short Film Festival, he put together a programme of experimental films from Scotland because we actually tied the second festival in with an exhibition at the [Scottish] National Gallery of Modern Art.

MJ: *Running Time*?

KK: That's right. So, Matt put together a programme of Scottish artists. I think there was Margaret Tait and a couple of others. And it really felt like the programme was just sort of 'uh,' just scraping together the names that could potentially at a stretch be described as experimental. It was a weird mixture of artists' film and more traditional experimental film. It felt at the time a little bit tokenistic. It strung together a programme of Scottish artists. Neither of those festivals had a particularly strong, overriding theme for the year, it was just what happened to be on my radar at that particular moment, who was around and suggesting stuff. My friend Sami van Ingen put together a programme of films from Finland in the second year.

MJ: Could you talk me through a bit more of the content of those festivals if you remember what else was being shown?

KK: I've got it on my computer somewhere. [...] It's a long time ago! I mean it's not that long ago but I guess a lot has happened in my life, in that time. I can send you—I've got the programmes here, at least draft programmes. We had a screening of new films from the UK, that was all pretty much London-based because it was curated by Al Rees and Nicky Hamlyn. We got Karen Mirza, as she was then called, and Brad Butler, Jennifer Nightingale, Jayne Parker, James Holcombe, Nicky Hamlyn, Samantha Rebello, Neil Henderson, Simon Payne. Then we had films from New York and actually there's something I can say about that because I had a—I think she was a PhD student or she was a Masters student at the time in

the department at Edinburgh. She was from New York and she'd studied at the New School with a bunch of people there like Jeanne Liotta, Jennifer Reeves and MM Serra, Joel Schlemowitz and she put together a screening called *Scenes from New York* and in that screening there's a film by Jeanne Liotta called *Loretta* [2003] and that is the next key phase in my career because that film [...] that was the next key turning point in my career. I don't know what it was about that film but it made me really interested in the way that artists were working with the material of film. I've got it in the acknowledgements of my book actually—that's about to come out—that that was the starting point for me. So that festival was actually had a major impact on my life. I'm going, 'oh, God, it's so long ago' but I've only just finished up the book that brings together all of my thinking on that topic from the past ten years. So that's twelve years that I've been thinking about photochemical film, obsolescence, technological transition, *etcetera*. I mean I'll send you the documentation.

MJ: I wonder if we could just cover some practical things: where did Diversions happen?

KK: At Edinburgh Filmhouse.

MJ: So, it had two editions, 2008 and 2009, and then was the reason that it had stopped that you'd moved to the [Edinburgh International] Film Festival?

KK: That's kind of it. In the second year I got funding from what was then Scottish Screen. I got a fairly sizable chunk of money from them and then little bit more money from the University. I think one of the major factors in that was that I was teaming up with the [Scottish] National Gallery [of Modern Art] with coinciding with this exhibition [*Running Time*]. I don't really know how that came about but it did and that was really good and actually helped to fund it.

In the period between the first festival and the second, I'd actually been brought on board at the Edinburgh Film Festival as an actual named programmer. So, the first year, in 2008, they said come on board and watch some submissions and you can be a consultant but then in 2009 they said to me, 'OK, you take it, it's your section, do what you want with it.' Which was amazing for me. So that year I did both the Edinburgh Film Festival and the Diversions Film Festival, and I think I was teaching and trying to work out what I was doing with my career. I just felt that I couldn't do both of those things. I really wanted to continue doing Diversions but realistically it was never going to happen. Now when I look back it's hard enough for me to do the Edinburgh Film Festival plus my academic job. I think at that time I wasn't tied down with a full-time academic job so I was a little bit more free and easy with my time but I got the sense that there was no way I could do both things. And I didn't necessarily need to. Over the past twelve years that's been my little, mini festival, that's been my Diversions and the freedom that I've had to do really what I want with that section has cancelled out any need to put on my own film festival: why would I need to?

MJ: Was Diversions—maybe a bit about the governance of it—was it solely you or did you have a team? What was the structure of that?

KK: Well it was me and I was helped by the administrative staff by what was then a kind of knowledge transfer department of Edinburgh University. They dealt with all the processing of—I think they did the programmes, the designing—I had a friend who was based in Glasgow at the time, he designed the website for me, so I paid him for the website and to keep that up to date, he designed the logo. Then it was the knowledge transfer team that did

everything else really: that put the programmes together, that got everything printed. I don't think I really paid very much for all that stuff. Each festival had a little symposium attached to it, they dealt with all the details of that like ordering catering, sign-ups, a lot of the administrative side was looked after by them and the rest of it was just me. I realised that even with a festival of only five or six screenings, just how much work it can be and I think that's why when I started curating for Edinburgh I thought—even back then when I had more energy than I do now—there's no way I can do both of these things. So yeah it was mostly me. To be honest, *Black Box* has been me, for ten years.

MJ: When you had to make your mind up about these two things, what were the considerations there when you had to choose between them?

KK: Of course, there's the element of prestige that comes from working for an international film festival and so when I weighed it up in my head it was really like—to be honest with you I don't think it was ever really an option for me, to do the two things. I don't think I ever sat and thought, 'next year I could possibly be doing both of these things.' I think my contract with the university was coming to an end and I was having to look for other work and it didn't look like there was going to be any other possibility there so I think in my head if I didn't have an affiliation with the university it would already be quite difficult to get funding. I was thinking about it from a funding perspective. I was wondering if I was going to be staying in Edinburgh anyway. And then I was just really excited about this new thing with the Edinburgh Film Festival and I wanted to put all my energies into that. I got the sense that it was going to take up quite a lot of my headspace and my time and I do remember thinking at the time—I remember articulating it to a few people—they would say, 'so are you doing Diversions again' and I said, 'no, I'm really focusing my attention on the Edinburgh Film Festival now.'

It's probably important to mention in that, that it's not that I'd just started at the Edinburgh Film Festival. Edinburgh Filmhouse and the Film Festival have been part of my life since I was about twenty. There was already quite a strong relationship there: I'd been involved as a student, I'd gone away, I'd come back, and I'd been brought on board as a programmer. That was quite a big thing for me at the time. I think that was probably motivating it. And also, I don't think I could be bothered with another round of funding applications. Even though I'd been successful and it had gone alright I just couldn't. The thing about working with Edinburgh is that I don't have to deal with any of that stuff. It's not my responsibility to apply for funding and to speak the language of funders. I just didn't think I could be bothered with that any more.

MJ: Is there a sense there that you have to justify—to funders, to audiences, to whoever—what you're doing less?

KK: Yeah, definitely. It's still the case isn't it? Every funding application I do is like—you're never able to say, 'I want to do this because I think it's really cool and it'll be beneficial because it'll give people an understanding of a field that's marginal and deserves to be more represented.' You have to do all the other kind of stuff. I think it was the, 'how is this going to be beneficial to the wider society of Scotland' and stuff that I just thought, 'uh, nah.'

MJ: Totally reasonable. I guess we could move on to your time at Edinburgh [International Film Festival]. Could you talk me through how that was for you, maybe some highlights, anything programming-related that really stood out as good experience?

KK: I think a really important thing about my curating at Edinburgh is the way that it's developed. I think we talked about it when we were having our phone chat last week. In the past four years or so I've become a lot more reflective about what I'm doing and my role as a programmer there. For quite a few years it was just like, 'yeah, I'll get through the submissions, watch loads of films. I need to pull together a programme. What's good? What's standing out.' And all the programmes have always reflected my interests as a researcher over the years. You could kind of track what's going on in my academic research over that period. I think it was when the festival was going to turn seventy, I was going to turn forty and I started thinking a lot more about what I'm doing here, what's my position in the festival, what's the history of experimental programming in the Edinburgh Film Festival? I hadn't really thought about that up to that point. I was reflecting on myself. It was those two anniversaries: my fortieth and the festival's seventieth and that coinciding.

MJ: Do you remember what year that was?

KK: That was 2016. Maybe it was just a coincidence that I started thinking about what am I doing, what kind of legacy am I creating, what legacy am I picking up on. Maybe it was coincidental that that overlapped with the seventieth. I spent a bit of time upstairs in the offices just going through all the catalogues from 1947. That so far has been the extent of my archival research. I read a few newspaper articles and things. I just started to become really interested in the history of the festival and how that overlapped with my own history and what I was doing there.

When I got to the 1970s, it was like wall-to-wall avant-garde film and fascinating at that time was that it was never segregated into a particular strand like *Black Box* which is very defined as a strand where you'll find a particular sort of work and if you're interested in experimental or artists' film that's where you'll go, if you're not you'll avoid, or dabble. It's pretty clear. I think Edinburgh is fairly consistent in that, in that the strands are quite well defined. That wasn't the case in the 1970s, there weren't strands. There were particular points of focus every year that changed but you'd have one page with like avant-garde films from Canada, and the next page you'd have some auteur film, and the next page would be a Mulvey film, or VALIE EXPORT or Jon Jost. I find that completely fascinating.

I realised that in 1976, which is when I was born—so you know all these kinds of dates came together for me—I mean, super exciting. Basically, over the ten days of the festival there was a five-day conference on psychoanalysis in cinema, in which Laura Mulvey was involved of course and then there was a five-day conference called the *International Forum on Avant-Garde Film*. Just amazing for me. I'd heard in the past about people talking about how at the time Paul Sharits, Yvonne Rainer, Michael Snow, Chantal Akerman, all these people had been at the Edinburgh Film Festival. I kind of wondered when that was but never gave it that much thought and then when I started going through the programmes I realised it was then, in 1976, just after I was born, this amazing time happened. It was just so exciting for me.

Since I finished my PhD I'd never really been that interested in historical research and never wanted to go back to that historical stuff but that made me really excited and so I collaborated with Mason [Leaver-Yap] on this *Regrouping*. It was Mason that suggested—there's an article written by Jonathan Rosenbaum on the Edinburgh Film Festival and he talks about *Regrouping* by Lizzie Borden and Mason said let's try to get *Regrouping* back to Edinburgh and so I went away and did a bit of research, though 'yeah, it looks quite interesting.' I knew *Born in Flames* a little bit. [...] Lizzie Borden, even though she'd put that film away for like forty years because it had created all these conflicts with the people she was making the film

about, she'd unearthed it for some anniversary edition, or some restoration of *Born in Flames*. Anthology Film Archive I think had asked her, 'will you show *Regrouping*?' and she hadn't shown it since 1976. She showed it at Edinburgh Film Festival, Anthology Film Archive and then she put it away—maybe it had one more screening. They said, 'let's do a fortieth anniversary screening' or something; she had intended on putting it back in the cupboard after that but then we got in touch and asked if she'll screen it. She thought, 'wow, this is amazing, what a kind of serendipitous circularity, of course I'll screen it.' We were like, 'wow.' So that has to be the high point for me in the past twelve years.

I'd say that's then the next turning point in my career, is becoming much more interested in histories of film festivals, legacies, retrospective screenings and bringing my practice as a curator into my academic work. That is probably where I'm going to go with my future research, at least for a couple of years anyway. I guess over the past few years juggling Edinburgh Film Festival with being an academic has been quite stressful and there have been—for about five years I thought I'm going to give it up next year—and all my friends are like 'you said that last year.' I can't quite do it because it's so much a part of my history and I feel like I've still got quite a lot more work to do so maybe I'll do this major 1970s research project and then we'll see where that takes me and maybe I'll move on. I think also, even though we do quite different things, Niall Fulton, who does the retrospective programmes at Edinburgh, he's been quite influential in putting a spotlight on female filmmakers and that's really influenced me.

MJ: Can I ask, what year did you move away from Edinburgh?

KK: 2003.

MJ: So, you've never lived in Edinburgh whilst programming there?

KK: It's possible that I haven't. Maybe there was one year because in 2009 I was offered a job at the University of Kent as a postdoctoral research fellow, so I moved from Edinburgh. I was back in Edinburgh from about 2007 to 2009, after I'd been in Paris. I was doing various bits and pieces of work and then I went down to Kent in about March 2009. There would have been that one year in 2008 when I wasn't officially the Experimental Programmer. So yeah, in all the time that I've been the Experimental Programmer I've not actually lived in Edinburgh.

MJ: That's interesting in itself. I wonder if I can take a slight tangent just based on some of this research that you've talked about—about the Film Festival in the 1970s. Could you speculate or talk about the shape of the Festival and how that's changed, or do you know anything about the conditions that made it such this interesting hot spot for avant-garde discussion and then which stopped that happening as well?

KK: I can. Matthew Lloyd wrote an interesting small book called *How the Movie Brats Took Over Edinburgh* [2011]. It was his Masters dissertation, I supervised it and Dina Iordanova published it through the St. Andrews film studies series. A lot of what I know about that period actually comes from Matt's book. I've got it, I can send it to you—I've got a PDF of it.

You know that Edinburgh started as a documentary film festival? I think around the 1960s it was becoming a little bit formulaic, of course it moved away from that documentary focus quite quickly, already in the 1950s it was quite diverse. In the 1960s, Murray Grigor was the

director and he brought on board David Will and Lynda Myles, who were in a relationship at the time I think, and Paul Willemen. They were quite young, cinephilic, very intellectual figures and they brought—I mean for Lynda Myles, for Lynda I think that all cinema is interesting. She was the director from [1973–1980] I think but she was involved for a couple of years before that with David Will. For her there wasn't this division between different kinds of cinema. She was as interested in Sam Fuller, and the auteurs, as she was in the London Film-Makers Co-op. She was going to the Film-Makers Co-op and hanging out there and bringing stuff back. You can see that relationship in the programme at the time. She's got this really diverse approach to the cinema and there weren't these separations for her and so the programme—Matt writes about it quite a lot—Edinburgh Film Festival in the 1960s was quite cinephilic, it was very interested in auteur study. They did retrospectives on particular directors and then they published these little booklets to accompany the festival, so you had the festival programme and then these. It was quite an intellectual festival then. Not that it isn't now but not to the same extent.

Of course, in the 1970s what's happening in film culture and film in general: film studies as a discipline is really developing, film theory is developing, drawing on continental approaches and structuralism and psychoanalysis, really influenced by French theory. The festival had quite a strong relationship with the *Screen* journal and so some of the conferences that they held were co-organised with *Screen*. You've got people like Claire Johnson, Laura Mulvey, Peter Wollen, involved in organising various different events like the first women's event in 1972. I'm quite at the beginning of my research into all of this so basically what I'm telling you is probably stuff that I've picked up from Matt's book.

The problem is that it's not written about, there's nowhere you can go really—apart from Matt's book—to learn about those really quite fruitful relationships between the *Screen* journal, Edinburgh Film Festival, London Film-Makers Co-op, various different sorts of funding streams, how it's possible that a festival would have that much emphasis on intellectual discourse. But it was criticised for that at the time as well, some of the newspapers were like, 'this is an elitist festival, it's not a festival for the general public, it's a festival for intellectuals.' So, I think it was quite divisive at the time as well as being really important in terms of the development of film culture and film theory.

MJ: Could you pinpoint where that maybe started to change or where there was a turn towards the industry?

KK: The 1980s. If you go through—for a couple of years they were all displayed in the café bar at Filmhouse—but if you look at the—it's really interesting to see it on quite a superficial level—I don't have them with me, I usually do but they're in my office in Aberystwyth right now—if you look at the brochures from the Film Festival in the 1970s, it's quite abstract design, they're all different colours but it's the same design. They're tall and thin brochures, really basic, black and white, not that much information—it's quite hard to grasp any detail about what was going on from those brochures. They all look exactly the same, quite beautiful when you put them all together. In the 1980s, you start to get these brochures with images of films on them. I just remember in the offices a couple years ago going through them all, and you've got like *E.T.* [1982], these quite big science fiction films—that's not to say that was the only emphasis, you've got Derek Jarman on one of the covers. So still in the 1980s there's this mixture of big budget Hollywood film and low budget British avant-garde film, but I'd say that that shift happened in the 1980s.

MJ: Do you have a sense of when avant-garde or experimental work starts to be siphoned off and develop in its own strand?

KK: 1980s—no, the 1980s it kind of disappears. The 1980s, it just trickles away and you really have to look hard for it. There's virtually nothing going on in the 1980s. The 1990s—I'd need to go back to my notes—but I think mid-1990s it starts to come back in with some, little bit half-hearted attempts to put a bit more focus on avant-garde film: *Persistence of Vision*. Something comes in the 1990s but pretty much in the 1980s and 1990s it's hard to find, in comparison with the 1970s it's a bit disappointing.

MJ: That's interesting because the Fringe Film Festival starts in 1985 and runs until 1996. So, I wonder if that had started to take responsibility for that kind of work? Do you know anything about that?

KK: No, I don't. What's happened pretty much is that in 2015, I think I'd had my book accepted but there was no great urgency to get on it. I sort of flounced around and did some research into the Edinburgh Film Festival. I thought, 'oh, this will be interesting as another project while I get my book done.' And then the book just took over my life. I didn't expect it to take this long but it's only just been wrapped up now. I've kept this interest in that history of the Film Festival project knowing that I'll come back to it at some point but it hasn't really advanced very much. It's nice to talk to you about it actually because it's bringing it back into my mind and making that interest—it's awakening it again. Well, I mean I've been working on the funding application so it's not the first time I've been thinking about it again but it's making me realise that it is a really important project to do because what surprises me is—let's face it—Edinburgh is not Cannes, it's not a glitzy, it doesn't have the same glitz and the glamour as Cannes. It's not radical like the Berlinale or Rotterdam, if Rotterdam could be described as radical, I'm not sure it can any more. It doesn't know where it fits, it doesn't know where to place itself.

I think Edinburgh has struggled with that identity crisis for quite a few years now, probably for much of my involvement. But the thing is, the thing that people forget is that Edinburgh has been more vital in terms of film culture and film theory than any film festival in the world. I actually really strongly believe that, that no film festival can claim to have advanced so many ideas around film theory, women's filmmaking, avant-garde filmmaking. It really was a paradigm shifter of a festival but of course it's not that anymore and it hardly really resembles that. People just forget and it's treated as this second rate, B-list festival. Part of my project is to make people realise that it is, historically, it is a really influential and important film festival [and I hope] it can find its identity again, I don't know. [...] One of the things that can't happen is that Edinburgh could go back to being that kind of festival anymore because we don't live in that kind of culture and more, we don't live in that kind of society anymore. A lot has changed in art funding in forty years, unfortunately.

MJ: I wonder, looking across the span of your involvement, if you've felt any change in response to showing this more marginal, experimental material? Are you meeting more resistance as you go on? I know, speaking to the Glasgow Film Festival context which I probably know better, definitely the *Crossing the Line* strand, which is their experimental stuff, has been more and more condensed over time. And I think that has to do with the explosion of event cinema and a pressure from more industrial forms.

KK: No, I'm kind of happy to say no. That hasn't happened to me. That's probably why I'm still doing it, because I guess I've been waiting for the year where someone will say, 'well,

your screenings weren't that well [attended],' because it's quite unpredictable. Some years I'm like, 'woah, the cinema is full, where are all these people coming from, are they in the wrong cinema?' and then there are years where it doesn't quite make it, the screenings are like half full—yeah, that's good and much better than it was when I took on the strand—it's not consistent so there are years where I think they're going to pull it, next year. And every time there's a change of director I think, 'ah, it's gone.' And that, I think, whilst five years ago that would have been quite upsetting for me, I would have been like, 'ah, God, that's quite devastating,' now I think what will be will be. I've done it for long enough that if that did happen, yeah, I'd probably be disappointed but then that would be sign: this is where I get off. But that's not happened so regardless of ticket sales, regardless of whatever else is happening in the festival, I still get—in fact, it's almost like there's been more support over the years because I've been doing more retrospective programmes, we've been doing more special events. We didn't used to do that with *Black Box*.

I remember a few years ago asking if I could do a retrospective and I don't think it was received very positively but since the 1976 thing it seems like yeah, it's valued as a strand. I guess my issue is that—I was reading this article by Roya Rastegar, it's part of a special issue of *Screen* on curating and things, and she talks about the role that film festivals have in representing diversity and difference. She said something about marginal, specialist interest being siphoned off, and how whilst on the one hand, yes, OK, there's a gesture to represent that work, on the other hand there's a clear like, 'it's separate,' and so in a way it kind of confirms difference and marginality. This is the problem I have with the Edinburgh Film Festival as it is, is that short film, animation film, documentary film, experimental film—it's quite traditional in its upholding of those boundaries between one and another. I don't really know how to move beyond that though. [...] I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm happy to keep going with *Black Box* and I think it is really interesting that that exists. A lot of people say, 'oh, it's the best thing in the Festival,' of course, that's people who are interested in experimental film, I'm going to say that. But even people who aren't really into experimental film like the idea that there's this strand. I'm always asking myself if there's a way of incorporating it into the programme that's a little less like respecting that idea of difference and marginality.

MJ: In a purely practical sense has the scale of your programming been consistent or has it shrunk or expanded?

KK: No, it's stayed pretty much the same. I used to have three programmes of shorts and two features and I think one year I really struggled to get them all into three shorts programmes and so I asked for an extra one and that just stayed. And I've had, as I said, each year I've had more programmes. Last year I scaled it right back because I was really right in the middle of doing the writing for my book so I really struggled just to pull together what I did, that was with help. I had someone who came on board for the first year and did most of the submissions viewing for me. It probably looks like, 'oh, *Black Box* is reducing' but that was my decision, I asked for it to be scaled right back. I couldn't do any more than that. This year it will be back to normal: four shorts programmes, two features, couple of special programmes. Hopefully, now that Lydia [Beilby] is on board with me and we're co-curating that strand, we're kind of hoping that we can build it and expand it. [...]

MJ: Thank you for your summary of your own career, that's really useful. I guess this is now just an opportunity to speak more subjectively as someone within the industry or the field, less about yourself and more on your views on things. OK, to your mind is

there a singular event in the history of avant-garde film in Scotland that seems really significant to you?

KK: It would be the *International Forum on Avant-Garde Film*, yeah 1976. I mean whatever one thinks about Peter Gidal's *Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film*, it has been quite a landmark theory and there haven't actually been that many theories of avant-garde film, if you compare it with more mainstream theoretical models. Avant-garde film doesn't really have many of its own theoretical approaches. Peter Gidal's text, as problematic as it is, it still remains that important landmark text and it was at the *International Forum on Avant-Garde Film* in 1976 that that text was first debated. The problem is that there just aren't many records of what was said, by who, and what the response to it was. Also, Peter Wollen's *Two Avant-Gardes*, that was talked about there as well. Those two texts came out in 1975/1976 so, I mean, what I wouldn't give to go back to 1976 and hear those ideas being discussed and debated. That's why, I think, it's shocking to me that no one has ever really written about that event. The idea that Michael Snow, Paul Sharits, Yvonne Rainer, Chantal Akerman, all of these people were in Edinburgh at the same time, it's just mind-blowing. Perhaps no one really thought about that at the time, that it was a really radical thing. It's just really hard to access. There are virtually no records of it.

If we think more recently, I don't know, I think the Kill Your Timid Notion events have been really important. I just wish that Scotland had more of its own experimental film scene. Seems to me quite dispersed and I don't really have any contacts with experimental filmmakers in Scotland, apart from Luke Fowler you know.

MJ: That's a good segue into this second question. Which is, have you noticed anything which would distinguish the circulation of work in Scotland from other contexts, whether that's the rest of the UK or the rest of the world.

KK: I can't really comment on that because I don't know. I think I'd probably have to admit that my kind of attention in the past few years—and when I say the past few years I'm talking like a good chunk of the past ten years—has been focused on getting this book done. It's almost like I've not, or there's aspects of what I do that I've just done in order to get done and in terms of curating for the Edinburgh Film Festival it really has just been a case of 'right, let's get this thing done, let's pull a programme together, let's make it have some kind of coherence.'

But in terms of like the distribution and how film moves in Scotland right now, I don't really know that much of what LUX Scotland are doing. My understanding of what's happening in Glasgow is woefully limited, I'm not proud to say. Of course, you have to understand that I'm also dealing with the Welsh context, for quite a long time I've been someone who is based in Bristol, works in Wales, curates for a festival in Scotland and spends most of their time traveling around various places in Europe so I've always been divided between different—pulled in different directions. Probably I don't really align myself with any of them.

MJ: Yeah, that's kind of nice. I might drill into that question about specificities more. I wonder, more in terms of the submissions you've seen and the programmes you've put together, in particular relation to work made in Scotland, is there anything you've noticed that might unify that kind of work or is there like a 'Scottishness' / is that a thing that exists?

KK: I'm always really interested in these questions. I don't really think in that way. I'm not so much interested in finding national specificity. Of course, I am someone who is interested in specificity, most of my career to date has been devoted to the pursuit of photochemical film. I wouldn't be so much attuned to finding a national voice and I'm not sure why one would be motivated to do so. No, I'm much more interested in looking at things from a broader thematic or political perspective. I see—if you were to ask me ‘do I see any themes emerging, or interests and tendencies emerging across films over particular historical periods?’—I'd probably be able to say yes of course, there was a wave of performance-based, dance film a few years ago, now there's an awful lot of work on human-non-human relations, materialities, a lot of people making work about the environment or different ways of representing. There's a really interesting blurring of the boundaries between documentary and fiction film. A lot of experimental films have become quite political in their aesthetics, almost recognising some responsibility for moving away from form for the sake of form and making those formal explorations meaningful in some way from a political perspective, those kinds of things I'd be able to identify but they transcend questions of national specificity and so they should. Perhaps I'm not able to answer that question because it's not something that I've ever really been that interested in, a Welsh voice, a Scottish voice, and Irish voice. I'm interested in political action and forms of resistance, I don't know, marginality in general.

MJ: Moving from the content of work to the container—exhibitionary work—what do you think Scotland needs to become more sustainable or to have a better infrastructure?

KK: I think the problem in Scotland right now is that there are platforms for seeing work, perhaps too many—you've got Edinburgh Film Festival, Alchemy Festival, clustered together almost sitting on top of each other, fighting for the same films. [...] I guess, I don't know what goes on really at Glasgow School of Art and Edinburgh [College] of Art, even in Dundee, but I just wonder where experimental film or artists' film is being taught and encouraged. I don't know where those spaces of production are. I can say it in relation to lots of different places across the UK. I probably have the same kind of comment to make about Wales, if you asked me where are the emerging artist-filmmakers or experimental filmmakers in Wales. [...]

Is it because of the London Film-Makers Co-op, if Malcolm Le Grice had been based in Glasgow, if David Curtis had been doing screenings in a Glasgow bookshop, would there be a different—would the landscape of artists' film in the UK be differently distributed. I can reel off twenty, thirty interesting filmmakers in London but it's difficult to list them in Scotland. However, it's probably important to say that my understanding of experimental filmmaking is really different to someone else's and so it's possible that I just don't move in those same circles. Perhaps there is lots of people making work in Scotland but I don't see much of it. You asked me, ‘is there a distinctive Scottish voice coming out of the submissions?’ I'd have to have a number of Scottish submissions in the first place, I hardly get any. It's rare that there's a Scottish film in the programme, not because it's rare that I choose them, it's rare that they come through submissions in the first place.

MJ: Yeah, that it interesting. I think maybe that has a lot to do with exhibition context and the way that people see their work displayed. Especially in Glasgow, I don't think people would conceive of moving-image-based work for a cinematic space as priority.

KK: Well, it is interesting because there is a real division right now between the gallery space and the cinema space. I think most artists are making work for a gallery space, in particular

places anyway. Why is that? Why has the gallery become *the* place to present films? Nothing about the cinema space has actually changed, it's only that people think about it differently and it is associated with a kind of traditional approach to moving image as though it's not possible to be radical or innovative in the cinema space anymore. I think if you look at the DIY scene of pop-up cinemas and micro cinemas, it's clear that these are radical spaces and alternative spaces. They exist outside that quite commercial, commodified world of galleries. Here you see, you tap into my resistance to gallery spaces as *the* only place where one should experience moving image work. I'm a big fan of the cinema space and I'll defend it to the end.

MJ: I wonder if there's something Scottish in that, in that I'm not sure—I know the kind of radical, political black box spaces you're thinking of, but I just don't know if that's happening in Scotland to the same extent. I can't think of a single cinema-type space where it's easy to get experimental work in. Maybe to flip that, that's a top-down thing that's happening in repertory theatres pushing out rather than artists pushing away. Certainly, from a Glasgow context that feels like the case, with the GFT. There's definitely hostility there that I don't think is necessarily coming from the artists' position.

KK: Yeah, you've pinpointed it well, that when one talks about the Edinburgh Filmhouse or the Glasgow Film Theatre, the association is with these quality arthouse cinemas. I don't know the GFT that well, I've done some events there, but you go to the Edinburgh Filmhouse outside of festival time and it is all very civilised, people eating their soup, and going to the latest art cinema release. It's now, I don't know, quite fractured, if those places don't seem to offer that radical, alternative space—the alternative but quite bourgeois, elitist *quality* cinema experience—whereas the cinema screenings that I've enjoyed the most are like you're sitting on a rickety old chair, you've got someone's head in front of you, you've got a beer in plastic cup, the screening hasn't started on time and why would you expect it to, it never does, no one knows when it's starting and when it's finishing.

I write about this in my book, they're spaces of material embodied encounter where the collective sense of being together and having this moment of exchange is almost as important as the screenings themselves. [...] No one really cares about having a nice soup before you go in to the cinema, maybe you don't eat at all but you chat about the films afterwards. These are super vibrant spaces for me and I've experienced it having been part of the BEEF screenings as well, Bristol Experimental Expanded Film, and just being part of that micro cinema, DIY, pop-up cinema experience. There's a lot of them in London: Analogue Recurring, Unconscious Archives.

MJ: The word that comes to mind there is *discourse* and I know having done a little bit of archival research at the GFT that they were doing similarly radical things as the Edinburgh Film Festival and it was holding symposia on like *The Future of Video in Scotland* [1976], and the condition of Scottish filmmaking [1988] and it was a place to congregate and discuss. That discursive element seems to have been evacuated I think.

KK: It has just migrated to different spaces is all. I think there's potential in those spaces that are popping up to fill in the gap for what cinemas aren't doing any more, these art cinemas. I think that's why what Christo [Waller] is doing in his PhD is really important in putting emphasis on that DIY spirit and what cinemas can be if we reconceptualise them as spaces of exchange and discourse, as you say.

H. Mason Leaver-Yap

Marcus Jack: Mason, I wonder if you could tell me a bit about your professional interaction with artists' moving image in Scotland throughout your career.

Mason Leaver-Yap: I studied at the University of Edinburgh, starting in 2001, and I started an English Literature and History of Art joint honours course. Through that I began to come into contact with various moving image works, some of which you would classify as just movies and some of which fall into more of an artistic category, because in Literature I did a film module—there was a lot of porosity between the two—I was looking at works by Bill Douglas, Lynne Ramsay, Lars von Trier, in a student capacity. Initially I thought I would end up in journalism—I'd done a lot of writing, professional industry writing, since I was about fourteen—and that was a trajectory that seemed most available to me. By accident the magazine that I was working for at the time didn't have an arts reviewer and on the basis that I did History of Art, I was considered to be somebody therefore suitable and so I started writing about art. I joined *MAP* magazine as an intern, then worked my way up to be a co-editor.

MJ: What year was that?

MLY: It was while I was still at university so maybe 2005. I guess there were two things there, one that was the work that I was interested in—there was a lot of film being produced, 'young' artists at that time coming through things like Becks Futures: Luke Fowler, Rosalind Nashashibi, Lucy Skaer, and I was really interested in this. I started what was probably the beginnings of a PhD but I backed out and it became a Master of Science. It looked at the history of moving image, I was looking again specifically at Rosalind Nashashibi and Anri Sala. I guess the journalistic interest plus the fact of needing to earn money and also my academic work combined. The thing about *MAP* at the time was that we were always trying to look at launch events and so one of the things that ended up happening more frequently—as part of a launch event—is that we wanted to show moving image. The CCA was available, or the GFT, and it was fairly cheap and practical to show this work and it also felt like a way being in a shared space with community. A lot of the *MAP* events, the issue launches, became about that inadvertently, and so that was when I started showing work.

MJ: Would that have been your first curatorial position?

MLY: It's hard to say. I certainly considered at a point that I was programming things. The word 'curating' came up a few times. I think when Steven Cairns came on board with *MAP* that term maybe came up more. I don't think it was necessarily Steven who pushed for that, but I was interested in it. Certain features I was writing about *MAP* at the time were about moving image, so there was all of that work.

MJ: Who was editor-in-chief at that point?

MLY: Alice Bain was editor-in-chief throughout the whole period and then by the time I left *MAP*, Steven, myself and Alice were all co-editors together. At that point I'd already moved to New York. I was still doing *MAP* when I was curating at the ICA in London. When I moved there again there was this slight gap in the programme. A lot of the projects that I was doing—I was co-curating projects alongside Richard Birkett who was—was he Assistant Curator? We all had these nonsense job titles that didn't really reflect the work we were actually doing—but we were curating things. Because of me organising events for *MAP*, my

skillset was put to work on more of the same, which was organising the events for the ICA. And so, in this landmark sixtieth anniversary project which we did called *Nought to Sixty* [2008], thirty of those projects were exhibitions and thirty were events. And more often than not, the split would be that I would do the events and Richard would do the exhibitions. It wasn't always like that though. Again, a lot of that was showing film and video.

One weird thing about the *Nought to Sixty* project was that there wasn't very much money to—how to put this—to professionally exhibit celluloid. I had some basic knowledge of how to spool up some 16mm, which was being used a lot at that time by artists. There was a decision made that instead of paying for a projectionist each time to show film, I would be sent off to David Lester's studio on Mare Street—or Cremer Street—around Mare Street in Hackney, to learn how to do it. He agreed that he would do this favour and so he taught me how to show 16mm, and then by default we showed a lot because suddenly we had the expertise to be able to show it.

I guess that's the early period of my work. I wouldn't say that it was very specifically targeted, a lot of it came out of happenstance about who I knew, what the community was in Scotland and also just how London was functioning then in relation to moving image. It was very close with LUX. At that time, we were hiring a lot of things and their celluloid was still kept on site, amazingly, at Shacklewell Lane. This is obviously before the fire and the riots in London [2011]. It's all changed now. So, there was an access to film. When I was in London there were a few people who took me under their wing, in terms of the projection of film and staging of moving image as a communal event: Stuart Comer, who was the curator at the Tate, was putting on incredible programming and was always kind and helpful; Ian White, I worked with fairly frequently and had a really good relationship with; Ben Cook and Mike Sperlinger. It was mostly white men, and I was very aware of that, albeit people who were very helpful to me and kind and generous, but there was this feeling that this had happened.

What was really interesting was that when did a massive clear-out of the store at the ICA—I'd started up this project called the Artists' Film Club which ran once a month, and I think is still running under Steven Cairns' curated programme—we found a badge that wasn't quite 'Artists' Film Club' but was something like that name, but it was Mark Webber who had been running it and I had no idea at the ICA that he'd been doing it. Through conversations with Mark, I was talking a lot about these things. So that was the London period, or the Glasgow-Edinburgh-London period.

MJ: What drove you to London, or what drove you *away* from here?

MLY: I applied for a Decibel fellowship, or scholarship, essentially an affirmative action programme—or positive discrimination programme—targeted at BAME applicants seeking to 'diversify' arts in the North East of England and I ended up at BALTIC. I did not enjoy my time there. The only other person that I knew at BALTIC was incidentally someone that I knew from Edinburgh, Matt Carter (who's now the distribution manager at LUX). We were pals, might have been studying on the same course, but he was the gallery manager or maybe assistant for Doggerfisher Gallery in Edinburgh, and so it was kind of ironic he was also an invigilator at BALTIC at the same time I was there. BALTIC was going through a lot of problems: the project that I was invited to do I didn't enjoy, but the ICA were doing a—it wasn't quite a tour—a collaborative exhibition project called *Double Agent* that was curated by Clare Bishop and Mark Sladen. As a consequence of working on that with Mark and Clare, there was a strong suggestion that I should leave BALTIC and come and work for

Mark at the ICA, specifically for the *Nought to Sixty* project, and so I came down and never finished that Decibel scheme, I quit Newcastle—I hated it. That’s how I ended up in London.

MJ: So, after ICA, where did you go?

MLY: I was in a relationship with Lucy Skaer at the time and when I got the job in London we’d decided that we would move down to London together. She didn’t know London super well but she was from Cambridge so she wasn’t far from her folks. She was still and continues to make work with Rosalind Nashashibi, so there was a decision that maybe it would be quite good for them to continue to work in closer proximity. I was in London for three, three and a half years, and Lucy got a residency in New York. There were some real problems at the ICA. At the time that Lucy got her residency, one of them was the financial mismanagement of the organisation, revealed a significant deficit—at some point it was projected to rise to £1.2 or something, million—the director Ekow Eshun resigned and things had become very fractious with Mark Sladen and his position in the institution. I was also told that although I had just curated the Rosalind Nashashibi exhibition, her first major solo show, that I would not be being brought forward in any more curatorial capacity and I would be kept in a more administrative position. So, I felt like it’d hit the end of the road for me. When Lucy got the New York residency, which was for a sizable amount of time, I think like nine or ten months, maybe not quite a year, I decided that I really loved my job, I really loved the ICA, but it was like the writing was on the wall, so I left and after I left I think they fired or lost about a third to half the staff—I think they project that it would be a third and it was more than that. I was lucky to get out when I did.

MJ: Did you crossover with Steven Cairns?

MLY: No, Steven didn’t come on until quite a bit later. They went through a number of different management positions and he came in when Gregor Muir was the director, which was an interesting thing because Gregor used to be the director of The Lux, on Hoxton Square. The role that was created for him was kind of the role that I was pushing for but was not available to me under the directorship at the time.

MJ: Frustrating.

MLY: Yeah, my feeling is that there were underlying reasons behind the inflexibility of the institutions to what I wanted at that time, that were not inflexible when Steven came along. It’s hard to exactly attribute it, just in terms of the management of that organisation preferring certain promotions of people; I wasn’t going to succeed.

When I moved to New York I was moving for a relationship. I didn’t know anybody there. Actually, I met two people prior to me going there, one was a student at the School of Art Institute of Chicago called Karen Archey. I had taught a summer school at the School of Art Institute and she was my liaison or a facilitator there to help the fellows and the guest speakers. I became friends with her then. I brought in Karen to do some writing for *MAP*. She’s now the curator of the Stedelijk in Amsterdam. The other person I met through James Richards. James and I became really good friends since *Nought to Sixty*, and we worked together, lived together, made books and exhibitions and all these things together, and continue to do so. Jim introduced me to Matt Keegan, maybe a month after I’d left and moved to New York, and Matt Keegan was an artist who is incredibly well connected, incredibly sociable artist in New York—a New York native. He basically introduced me to everyone I knew in New York.

Initially I didn't really have much of a purpose there. I continued to work for *MAP* and so I applied for a journalist visa and produced and edited the magazine from there right up until I left or it ceased to operate in the way that it did. While I was there I was still putting on events. I developed a project called *The Voice is a Language* which was with Meredith Monk. It was the first time I'd really thought about an expanded idea of legacy, working in multiple directions, with the idea that Meredith Monk could influence Sue Tompkins or Cara Tolmie, and people that didn't know Meredith Monk until I'd mentioned her. So, trying to look at formal similarities and resignifications.

One of the reasons I did that was I saw the Peter Greenaway documentary on Meredith Monk, part of a series called *Four Composers*, produced for Channel 4, and I was really inspired. I found out that Meredith Monk's office was like four doors down from my studio, so I was just like: this is convenient. Carolee Schneemann was also next door, Rosalind Krauss was upstairs, Joan Jonas was only a few blocks away. The thing that's really important to remember about that moment was that all of these people had yet to be 're-discovered,' at that point, so nobody was necessarily looking or paying attention in the way that I felt they should be. I guess the work that they'd made in the 1990s was somehow unfashionable or a bit painful, or the artworld wasn't very interested in looking at it. Definitely that was the case with Joan. Because I had time and I had so many connections with LUX—LUX was able to educate me on distribution systems so I knew how to go to EAI for free and stuff like that.

MJ: What year was this, just for reference?

MLY: I moved to New York in 2010ish. I moved to London in 2006 or 2007 and then was in New York 2009 or 2010. And so, I would screen things, sometimes semi-privately, sometimes publicly. I would put on screenings at the *e-flux* office. *e-flux* was doing incredibly well for itself but nobody really understood what it would become necessarily, but there was this feeling that—I was really broke, so David Lester, who had taught me all these 16mm skills would—he's American, originally from Milwaukee or Indianapolis, somewhere like that—he would get jobs but he couldn't do them because he was based in London so he would say, 'you can send me over and this is the cost of the flight, accommodation, plus my services,' but he was like, 'look, why don't you freelance for me and be my installer?' So, I was doing a lot of install work around then, so *e-flux*, whenever they showed film I would install for them.

There was only four people, in terms of quality actually maybe only three people that could install celluloid, 16mm loopers in a quality way, properly to museum standards. That was always a way, if you were short on rent, you knew how to pick up the work. *e-flux* became a place that was showing a lot of film and video. [...] There was always work available through David or through other contacts. I could always get a free lunch at *e-flux*, I didn't have any overheads, I wasn't earning any money, I was really broke, but then I was still editing the magazine and I was living in a cushy situation in that I was there with a partner who had a residency, so accommodation was free. It allowed me to get set up in a slightly different way and start writing again more as opposed to just editing. Through that I started doing guest spots at SculptureCenter, MoMA PS1, Artists Space, a lot of places. What was really interesting at the time was when I was doing these *ad hoc* screenings, Ed Halter and Thomas Beard had just set up this project called Light Industry. I attended quite a few of their programmes, but it felt like a period of moving image art history that I understood was important but I didn't enjoy, and it felt very canon, to me.

MJ: 1960s, 1970s oriented?

MLY: Yeah, coming after this period of formalism, structuralism; these American white guys, often dead. They had huge traction and they wrote these really interesting press releases and it was the first place where I'd seen people doing something slightly hokey—the projector would often break or they'd do something wrong or the speakers would go off—it wasn't like a pristine set up, in contrast to what I had been used to or participated in myself. Yet they were still charging for it. I don't know if they'd registered as a non-profit at that point but it felt like this DIY mentality was quite inspiring, but also a bit like 'shit, someone's already doing the thing that I want to do.' That's how I felt about Light Industry a lot. There was a period where we were like, 'oh, we all want to do this thing, we want to show, or reconfigure our relationship with artists' moving image again.' It had this huge history of course with Jonas Mekas and Anthology [Film Archive], but maybe bringing in younger artists. [...] Some of it was celluloid print. People were making a political point of print. There were people who were still insisting on exhibiting in that way, like Lucy [Skaer] and Rosalind [Nashashibi] of course, Luke [Fowler], Duncan Campbell, and then in terms of an American audience, like Lisa Oppenheim, Margaret Salmon, trying to think of other people. At a certain point the technology just got so good that it was less of an issue. It was like, 'oh, actually, this really does look good.'

MJ: Did you know Margaret [Salmon] in New York?

MLY: I knew Margaret and maybe Lisa through Store Gallery. Store Gallery represented—it's defunct now—there was a second director whose name I forget. Niru Ratnam was one. Store Gallery represented Rosalind Nashashibi, Ryan Gander, Margaret, Lisa, and then they went on to represent Nashashibi/Skaer. So, I think I met them through that. Margaret had studied in London and I saw her work as part of this thing called *Black Cube*—it had a really not great name—when Sarah Munro was still at the Collective on Cockburn Street. She had invited Polly Staple to show a work and she selected Margaret Salmon, and that was her degree show work. I was like, 'wow, that's amazing.'

MJ: So, we're in New York, and then you leave in?

MLY: 2013.

MJ: You were there a few years.

MLY: Yeah, like four years. Before I left London for New York I'd had a certain number of conversations with Ben at LUX about moving back to Scotland whilst shit was hitting the fan in the London ICA. Ben and I had toyed with the idea of setting up some sort of LUX Scotland dedicated office, but then I went to New York for four years. Before I moved back I called Ben and said, 'look, I'm moving to Glasgow, should we revisit this conversation.' He was very much like, 'I'll believe it when I see it.' I felt like he maybe thought it was going to happen when I was coming to the end of my time in London and then it just didn't for four years, and maybe there wasn't anybody else comparable in Glasgow or Scotland that he would set that up with.

MJ: I've definitely seen it written somewhere before that LUX Scotland was in development from 2009 to 2013, which seems like a long time. So that was really just bookended by you being away.

MLY: Yeah, basically. I mean Ben could have been speaking to other people, I'm not aware of that. Though it was always a conversation that we had had. I think that was just in terms of my close relationship with the Scottish art scene and Glasgow in general. I had never lived in Glasgow up until the time that I moved there in 2013 but I knew it quite well. I hit the end of the road with New York in that it was a real grind, I loved it and it was amazing but I just—there was a job that I could have gone for and I 'should' have gone for, in this idea of a career path, but I felt like suddenly I was just doing it because that's what I was supposed to do as opposed to something that I actually really wanted. As soon as I realised that and looked around at the landscape of the places where I could work, which was essentially nowhere—at that point PS1 was Peter Eleey and Klaus Biesenbach—there was nowhere where I actually wanted to work. Artists Space, when I was leaving, was Stefan Kalmár and actually Richard Birkett had moved there. Stefan would never hire someone like me, ever. Matthew Higgs was at White Columns and was never going to leave and he definitely wasn't going to hire me. There was just this dominant culture that indicated a certain unemployability for me moving forward. As much as I loved the SculptureCenter, I was just like, 'fuck it, I'll go to Glasgow.'

When I moved, I guess two things happened. One was that Ben and I had started really talking about LUX Scotland again and I started talking very actively with the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis about a fellowship or scholarship position that would be funded through—like so many things in America—a philanthropic foundation. It was specific fund from the Ruben Bentson Foundation that would allow me to only be there part time, and so these two things happened in parallel. I think Ben had been talking a lot with Creative Scotland and, you'd have to check this with him, but from what I remember it was near the end of the year for funding and there was a pot of cash available, it was £30,000, and we were told to get something together with literally hours, maybe twenty-four hours. We had a lot of documents ready to go, like scoping documents—a lot of consultation—and we knew that if we just applied for it then we could probably get it.

MJ: Was the idea of LUX Scotland public at that point, was there an audience knowing about this development?

MLY: Ben had done a consultation looking at the viability of a Scottish dedicated agency and it seemed like there was a need. Internally, Ben and I had been talking about a certain degree of discomfort around the fact that the LUX Associated Artists Programme, that Ian White had set up, was very popular amongst young Glasgow artists but what was happening was that they were going through the AAP and then staying in London.

MJ: A brain drain?

MLY: There was this feeling of brain drain but you're literally talking about a small number of people, but the Glasgow art scene was itself small so it felt significant. We were trying to look at what would better conditions be for serving a community in its own location, and so that's how we got the money, off the back of that. It was like a year pilot trial. I think Sarah Munro helped us find an office. It was an off-year in Glasgow International—and Sarah Munro, she was still director at Tramway at the time, she still had fingers in pies with Glasgow City Council and Sarah McCrory, because it was a GI off year, moved into a smaller office and I think it was both Sarah McCrory and Sarah Munro's idea to allow artists to use that space for residencies—I think Clare Stephenson had used it, Ciara Phillips possibly, Laura Aldridge, I can't quite remember. It was a massive office and so they were all in this tiny bit and we were in this office, the size of the Project Room at Trongate 103.

MJ: Did that rely on a bit of charity at that point?

MLY: It was all beg-borrowed. I was using my own laptop. We didn't have money for a phone line so we just invented one on Skype. All of the infrastructure that a new organisation would need sat on the back of LUX. The idea was that LUX could provide a certain amount of support for anything moving forward, with the idea that at some point LUX Scotland would be big enough to apply for its own charitable status. The reason for that was that we wanted to ensure we could apply for Scottish funding but we were worried that LUX as an Arts Council England portfolio project based in London would not count for that. I don't know where that is now but it was always in the back of our mind that this had to be a temporary measure.

MJ: To my knowledge it still is, there's a nominal fee that's paid but isn't actually paid. So, the team, how did that develop? It was you, and then...

MLY: Then we interviewed for an assistant, or like a manager. I think it was Luke Collins, I don't think anybody pre-dated Luke. Then we had interns, we had a paid internship scheme through Film Hub or something.

MJ: Was that Nick [Thomas]?

MLY: Nick was there. Many people, as you know, came through that programme: Eilidh Ratcliffe; Seán Elder, who was one of the most amazing interns. Ah, I remember how it was, it was people on the [MLitt Curatorial Practice (Contemporary Art) at The Glasgow School of Art] course. We got Eilidh through that, we got Seán through that, and then we started realising that we could apply for money, [Open] Project Funding. I feel like as part of this *Archaeology and Exorcisms* thing, they recorded a video of me going through the finances a bit so that might be online if you need it.

MJ: So, you're in Trongate 103 and then there was a small time in an architect's office, is that right?

MLY: Just above all the jewellery stores, this amazing building.

MJ: Argyle Arcade?

MLY: Yeah, so we were up there in an open shared space, because obviously GI needed that room back at some point in time, and we were paying not very much in rent there. That was also an amazing building because we did a collaboration with Toby Webster—or I did a collaboration with Toby—though strictly speaking it was LUX Scotland and The Modern Institute—to show these Jack Smith films on the top floor, which was like a really exciting prospect on the basis that people just hadn't seen that much Jack Smith. I was obsessed with Jack Smith, I mean I always have been. The actual space we were showing it in was like a New York loft, it's incredible. I mean there are ongoing issues in the sense that it is not elevator accessible, so you would need to go up all those steps, which isn't great.

Then eventually a more permanent solution was found with Francis McKee at the CCA. We'd been on this list of potential cultural tenants for a while but of course you just need to wait until someone moves out so you can move in. I can't remember who it was, maybe Cryptic moved to another space, anyway that allowed us to move to CCA and pay a lot less in rent and finally have a stable base.

MJ: And all the benefits of being a Cultural Tenant with the screening facilities and stuff. That's a really good potted history. So, you left LUX Scotland in 2016?

MLY: Yeah, 2016. The reason that I left was that the project at the Walker Art Center was just requiring more of me and so was LUX Scotland. One of them had to go. The thing that I realised about LUX Scotland was that Ben and I had created this organisation that was getting larger, getting more demanding and required more from everyone. It especially needed more from its director. At the Walker I was doing a lot of research-based work, I was also doing a lot of commissioning, I was working within a larger institution with people helping me, and at the end of the day it's like what I love. With LUX Scotland, I have had so many sleepless nights worrying about people's salaries, wages, employment conditions, I can do it but it was costing me something, and the more I did the Walker job the more inspired I became, and I got better at it as well.

MJ: Did that involve a lot of time in Minneapolis?

MLY: Not necessarily. I mean I would have liked to have spent more time than I did there. Because I was commissioning artists who didn't live in Minneapolis, the point of being there was to bond with the institution and participate in institutional life more than to do my job properly. I got to the point where I realised that something had to give. I knew that LUX Scotland needed more than I could give it and so I self-fired. I was really excited for what it could become but realised that I wasn't the person to do that. I had the energy and the vision and the naivety to get it off the ground with Ben, but in terms of the administrative, foundational expertise and level-headedness, I could do but I'm not very interested in it. I was just always excited about doing things and I realised that actually what LUX Scotland needed to do was less events, more fundraising, more sectoral consultation.

MJ: For sure that curatorial impetus has become more arms-length in its character, almost divested now so much that it doesn't curate itself. What was it that shaped the programme whilst you were there?

MLY: Completely just personal desire. Me and Luke going, 'oh my God, I can't believe this has never happened' or 'why has nobody seen this' or 'weren't Black Audio Film Collective really great.' A lot of that: this feeling of being in a sweet shop, which was the LUX collection, and all the networks that we had and also the level of access. Being able to see what people were working on because we were already friends with them and being like—in a way that I think is quite close to the idea of Glasgow art community: going, being excited, and realising that more people need to see it. Certainly, that was the case with Duncan Marquiss's work, just watching it and being like 'wow'; Charlotte Prodger; Luke Fowler—just seeing rushes and then Luke would come in and be like, 'why do you never show blah, this is terrible.' It wasn't that it was a pre-planned idea but I think that looking at where the Scottish art scene was with its understanding of what moving image was, there needed to be a lot of very basic groundwork that we need to cover. We need to show a lot of different types of things. We also need to show what people are making here and then we can begin to understand the arc of a programme. People just needed to see things, there was a real desire but there wasn't actually much available.

MJ: Yeah, I think it's still an issue with foundational understanding, unless you're in a university context, you can't access that, which is still a conversation with people that I have all the time. No one sees Kenneth Anger films, or no one sees [Stan] VanDerBeek, or these people who are Wikipedia-famous but have no context here.

MLY: The only thing to say is that one of the things we tried to do was that we applied for this huge fund from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation—so big that I can't even remember how much it was—to deliver what we framed as a membership programme but was actually like a learning programme, just to try and address some gaps in knowledge. One of the things that I remember that used to horrify me that people would say, 'oh I wouldn't apply to Margaret Tait [Award], that's too much money, I wouldn't even know what to do with that.' We need to really tell people how they can invest in themselves and their practice, like what their time is worth and what it costs to make moving image of a certain quality.

MJ: Yeah, in my experience of SUPERLUX seminars, the professional practice leaning ones, has been so enlightening. I remember Erika Balsom did one about editioning and it was like 'woah, I'd never even thought.' It's funny though, this needs to be repeated, you need to do this constantly because there's always an in- and outflow. I guess maybe we should finish that professional timeline and steer back to that. So, you've left LUX Scotland, working more with the Walker, and then Berlin?

MLY: Yeah, so I left LUX Scotland, thinking this is me and the Walker for life. People have worked there for like fifteen years. Then the organisation, the philanthropic fund that funded me changed its structure and suddenly there wasn't any money to pay me. I left very sadly in 2017, and I still want to go back. I closed a chapter of commissioning and so all the work that I produced there is under the banner of 'Moving Image Commissions' and even the fact that I worked at the organisation at that time, it is particular in the sense that it was called the Film/Video Department, which I felt was really antiquated. I was part of a transition with the artistic director and the head of department to change that to 'Moving Image Department.' So, all of the first commissions to come out of the Moving Image Department are all projects which I made by dint of titling rather than anything else.

During that time in 2017 I was invited to fulfil an associate curator position the KW in Berlin. Essentially it was a bit of a funny one, Krist [Gruijthuijsen] looked at the Walker and just tried to do a transposition of that but under very different financial circumstances. The Walker is a really large institution that is a collecting institution and a museum as well as an art centre. The KW is a much smaller institution that has no collection, is an institute of contemporary art and so the idea of producing these commissions has to exist in different terms. While the Walker Moving Image Commissions would ask artists to produce work which would then go into The Ruben/Bentson Moving Image Collection, the KW, while it was very much similar financial amount, what would happen is that two editions would be siphoned off from the main body of work of each artist and one would go to Julia Stoschek Collection, who pays half of the fee—obviously a private collection, she also sits on the board of KW—and then the other one goes off to Outset Germany/Switzerland which is similar to Outset in the UK—it's like a pool of collectors who group money together in order to produce funding for non-profit institutions to create works that then get gifted to permanent collections in their country. The KW production series—the name I came up with to try and focus people on the idea of KW as originally a place of production, as opposed to just of exhibition, but also trying to find it different enough from the Walker moving image series—we would produce that without necessarily the intention of exhibiting it in the KW, but exhibiting it remotely with other partners. Julia Stoschek's collection is based in Düsseldorf but she has an exhibition venue in Berlin and Outset Germany/Switzerland, in conversation with us, are going to donate the full series, three series' worth of works, which will be six different works of art, to Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach, Germany. There are criticisms of the private-public forms of collection of this, which bring with it a

really different set of conditions around the conversation of commissioning with the artists, than happened at the Walker. Everybody at the Walker and outside the Walker was just like, ‘wow, that’s a great thing,’ but now Julia Stoschek Collection are involved I think there are questions about that. For sure, I’ve had very complicated conversations with artists about the value of their work, in terms of how much money they get, versus what they could sell the work for in theory. The alternative argument is that Julia Stoschek would not collect these works, and certainly I would say there is going to be a very interesting period when the commissioning comes to a close, now this is the last year [2020], where all of these works get siphoned off and for sure—in terms of what Julia usually collects—the pieces that I’ve produced at KW are completely different, you can tell.

MJ: An awkward partnership?

MLY: It’s not really, Julia has been amazing. Her staff are incredible. The buildings, staging the exhibitions there has all been really positive, as is often the case when you work with private institutions, as opposed to non-profits that have no money. But I appreciate that there is a difference in taste; for instance, one of the works is looking at incursions into natural waterlines—songlines—in indigenous territories in Australia, it’s a kind of experimental documentary and I don’t think that would be something that Julia would usually offer an approach. But she’s trusted me to go and produce that thing, so now it’s going to sit in that collection forever. I admit that the role of private finance in these non-profit structures is really complicated though, and not something I personally have an easy time with both in terms of how value is attributed to the work of artists and to the idea of freelance production. There isn’t, however, many alternatives that offer such a level of freedom and flexibility, or at least none that I’m aware of.

MJ: And that brings us to now?

MLY: Yeah, I’m in the third and final year of the KW Production Series. It was always going to be three years which is interesting because Walker was three years as well. While I do the KW production series, which is dedicated to moving image projects, at the KW I also do a number of things alongside of it. In March we’re launching a book with Beatrice Gibson, in April we’re launching a book with Andrea Büttner, of course who are both people from the Production Series and these books have come through pre-existing relations or the projects themselves. Next year I’m doing a show with Renée Green at KW and she was one of the artists that came through the Moving Image Commissions at the Walker. There are always these interconnections.

MJ: Moving into this more production-based role, is that where you’re feeling good?

MLY: It’s hard to say. On a certain level I think that there’s a high degree of anxiety around the long-term viability of this, in a financial sense. Things are fine and doable, but there’s no sense in which this feels like I can just continue to do this. I would say that this is a bit of a hallmark of everything I’ve done, which is that I’ve tried to follow or set up or invest in models that don’t exist previously in institutions. All of these roles didn’t exist in the institutions before I did them. The problem with that is that you end up specialising to a point that an institutional structure or infrastructure can’t recognise you anymore. It’s really hard to know how you elevate within that: how do you upscale in a way that is very natural in the commercial film industry and I would say other sectors, but within artists’ moving image which just isn’t that? To have such a specific skillset is not in itself good enough. It can make you a really good friend for an artist to speak to when they’re trying to produce or edition

something, but in terms of my personal feelings about my own future employability beyond the KW production series, I would be very curious. There are probably only a small number of institutions in the world that I can now work at. My specialism is great but it hasn't prevented a precarious situation for myself.

MJ: That might be a good place to turn more to Scotland and the context here, as a place that doesn't have one of those institutions where you could naturally fit. I have a few questions that have already been answered, but this is maybe more drawing on your own expertise, awareness and the ecology that we exist in. I wonder if you could speak to how things have changed in Scotland throughout your professional involvement in things, maybe from working at MAP to now?

MLY: I think the introduction of LUX Scotland has been really key for a lot of people, just in terms of offering a resource in various different ways from consultation, advice, to people being able to ask questions and actually get answers. I feel like it was quite *ad hoc* for a long time but things around practice, fees, technological abilities, these are all key things that LUX Scotland has been very instrumental in, alongside the prospect of technology that becomes so much more available.

I think there is just generally an ease of use around moving image. Right from the very first strategy documents that Ben and I were writing for Creative Scotland around this idea that people see moving image as somehow a 'difficult' medium, we were arguing that it's one of the most comprehensive and accessible mediums, in contrast to experimental writing or poetry or even sculpture and painting. Now with technology, everybody feels able to shoot video and it not be a terrifying prospect. I think there has been a better platform for making certain things visible that were invisible before, so practices like Anne-Marie Copestake—both in terms of her artistic practice but also what she was doing in terms of documenting an art scene through *Trigger Tonic*—just became viable, finding pockets of cash for her to digitise these tapes, and when I say digitise it's not just technologically digitise but actually have money to pay yourself for the time to do the work, that is work; that has been key.

Backing up the Margaret Tait Award has been really important for younger artists. Charlotte Prodger was already in Glasgow on the MFA when I moved here, I wasn't close with very many people, I knew people through Lucy Skaer. Charlotte was one of the few people that was my friend who had previously lived in London too. Having lots of conversations with her about need and access to materials and how to show, I think that's a really good indication of the trajectory of her practice.

MJ: Yeah, I guess Charlotte seems to represent a lot in this narrativisation.

MLY: Jamie Crewe as well, from a younger perspective, somebody that came here—Jamie and I both came to Glasgow at the same time. I guess their Margaret Tait Award film is going to be shown fairly soon [Ashley, 2020]. Somebody who has really benefitted from being able to have conversations around the possibilities of moving image, you have people who are really technically skilled both within their prior network but also here.

MJ: I guess maybe they speak to, or I wonder if you agree, that there is a transition in identity politics from the whiteness of the ICA and that position to where we are now?

MLY: Oh God, yeah, I'm so conscious of it. I mean even New York was quite... Of course, I'm completely complicit in that in terms of my earlier programming, and I feel like there's

been a lot done—probably most of the heavy lifting has been done by Transmission Gallery to re-evaluate and actually really consider what access is. I think things have really changed. One of the reasons I was terrified of moving back to Glasgow from New York, or even from London, was that it just felt pretty homogenous, dude-bro, very straight: guy artists drank beer and women artists drank wine. It was really very intense and it wasn't like these things were unfounded. One of the key things that happened when I moved back was that a group of us started up a queer reading group that was Charlotte Prodger, Jamie Crewe, Emilia Beatriz, Casey O'Connell and it's interesting to think about those—Emilia, Jamie and Charlotte in terms of their practices and they seem to symbolise different stages of moving image practice in Glasgow, for me.

MJ: That speaks to maybe something about social network theory and not cliques, but groupings. Do you think those have changed, the networks?

MLY: I guess it's hard to know because I wasn't part of the networks that I wasn't part of. I mean, there's ways in which it seems like one continuous line—which isn't to say that it hasn't changed—it certainly has been refreshed and renewed and expanded and extended. I'm still conscious that I now live in a situation that I've lived in numerous times in my life which is that: Richard Birkett has just moved to Glasgow, Charlotte Prodger is just around the corner, so is Lucy Skaer, there are people from London and from New York that were in my life then and are still in my life now, which seems remarkable given the different locations we've all lived in. We've each managed to make a career out of what we were doing then. I don't know if people from the late 1990s, early 2000s would be able to say that would be the same. They would probably argue yes. You could speak to people like Cathy Wilkes or Luke Fowler, I guess Lucy Skaer, Duncan Campbell.

MJ: Yeah, I guess a sharper way of putting that would be that LUX Scotland has a style and the moving image scene has a style, to the exclusion of platforming diversion from that. I think of more expanded cinema stuff, or people working more with performance or video-heads from the 1980s. LUX Scotland, being the only organisation, has definitely shaped a kind of moving image.

MLY: That has come out of quite a strong assertion of personal taste, at least from my end. There are places that still cater to this, to a certain extent, and for a long time I felt like Alchemy was providing a safe haven for that. Before Peter [Taylor] went to Berwick, I felt like that was happening; and it also happens in pockets everywhere: this kind of love of the materiality of film, structural film, developing your own. That was never my interest, it was always my suspicion—I feel like it's a privilege to be interested in formal questions as opposed to really thinking through political content on a social level.

This isn't to say that you can't have diversions from that but that's why it was so important to show things from outside of the scene like Black Audio Film Collective, it's why it was so important to show Jack Smith and really tell people about these works existing, as well as show thing like *Trigger Tonic* and support some of the work that significantly predated this moment. This has very rarely been confronted head on, I remember a very interesting conversation that was full of a lot of silence or hesitation on the phone with Richard Ashrowan [former director of Alchemy] a number of years back when Rachel Maclean was invited to do the Scottish Pavilion at Venice [2017]. I don't know Rachel and I can't say anything about her apart from the fact that I don't like her work, it's not work I feel invested in and I also don't feel like it's work that needs me. She's going to have a great career.

LUX Scotland isn't set up for people who don't need help, it's set up for things which may be more challenging to make under the social conditions or the economic conditions. Richard just outright asked me, 'I get the sense that you don't like Rachel's work,' and I was like, 'well'—I can't remember exactly what I said, but it was too the effect of, 'you wouldn't be wrong and I don't really have an interest in it.' It's hard when you're an institution that's there to provide opportunities for a sector, the way that I squared it was that this person has a great opportunity, this person has a great career, they have a great skillset, they have access to a lot of the things that they require; but what I'm here to do is try and set up infrastructure for people that don't have any of these things and get them to this point.

MJ: That maybe raises an interesting question about exhibitionary platforms and their difference. Rachel has done really well through television and via the Internet, but I wonder how you see the options for artists?

MLY: I think it entirely depends on what they want to make. I think it's really interesting that Jamie Crewe has managed to successfully create works that are quite mobile, they're very adaptive to cinema conditions, monitor conditions, installation conditions, and I think that they understand the malleability of that and are also interested in these different scenarios. I would say that Charlotte Prodger was also like that but has become more specific to the point where only certain places can now show the work because it requires such a level of technical finesse that is not always available. For instance, she could never show at Transmission now, she has to basically show in a cinema condition at a place like Tate. I think that there are these different options in terms of exhibition venues. I think increasingly though people are not necessarily like, 'I am a video artist' or 'I only create moving image.' With these two artists themselves, they exhibit in multiple forms. Hardeep [Pandhal]'s just got his show up at Tramway [*Confessions of a Thug: Pakiveli*, 2020] and it's like he's done the show four ways: the same show again and again but rendered in different forms, whether drawing, painting, sculpture or video, it's essentially like adaptive. Maybe that's quite an interesting way of looking at things.

I do think there's an opening for cinema and I don't mean in the technological sense that Charlotte needs cinema. I'm thinking of long-form. I'm intrigued by where long-form is going to go, instead of these smaller shorts. There is now definitely the infrastructure: Berwick, under Peter Taylor's direction has become incredible; Edinburgh International Film Festival has always showed quite a lot of structural film but shows shorts; Glasgow Short Film Festival; Glasgow Film Festival; these are platforms in which artists' moving image has occurred in short form. The reason that long-form hasn't really appeared is primarily a financial one but it doesn't need to be a technological one any more. I'm intrigued to see where this goes.

MJ: I guess thinking about City Projects' recent publishing [Dan Ward (2019), *The Politics of Production: a report on the conditions for producing 'artists' moving image'*] and the question for me is where does the money come from for that? Relating that to a question for you: how do you see the map of resource as it is available to artists and curators in Scotland?

MLY: I think Brexit is going to have a huge effect in terms of who is able to come here and how anyone will earn money in any relation to making art. I think those are all very negative things but I think that people will still continue to produce. Whether or not it can be seen is another matter. And in terms of that visibility of culture, I think for curators right now, we

have this situation at the moment where curatorial positions are being vacated and not filled in Scotland and it's very worrying. Even directorships have been vacated and not filled.

After Sarah Munro left Tramway there was no directorial replacement. While I feel critical about the real estate expansions of a lot of London-based institutions, I'm equally worried that institutions here are choosing to contract rather than sustain their work force. It's really confusing. How can you have an effect on programming, critical thinking, curatorial (whatever term you want to use in terms of that word that is like platforming art that you don't make yourself) with less staff, less roles? It's really hard to see a way forward that feels particularly positive. There are really interesting people around, but whether or not the resource is there to allow creativity to surface publicly is unclear to me. [...]

MJ: Ok, I might blast through a couple of these, some may have easier answers. To your mind is there a single significant event that's important in this history and that I should know about, say from *MAP* or 2005 to now?

MLY: The funding crisis around Transmission. That was a pretty big moment. Not that you don't know about these things but just in terms of moments when you step back and are like, 'wow, shit.' Regardless of if it's positive or negative, it's definitely not neutral.

I think the development arc of GI is very significant in terms of who it's for, and also people's relationship to that organisation and people's relationship to the vision or mission of that project, I think it's very fundamental.

MJ: In terms of self-sacrifice?

MLY: I think it's just like, who is GI for? And what is it for? I think these are really important questions that don't have very pretty answers but I think that [Sarah] McCrory did a really excellent edition, that first edition that she did [2014] presented a bit of a sea change moment in the identity of that project and something else has happened since that moment. That for me is a bridge or a middle between a before and after. One of the reasons it's so important is because GI is so visible. How does the visibility actually affect the economics of a city like this? How does it interrelate or not with similarly biennial-like things like Edinburgh Art Festival?

It's hard to discuss without sounding so Glasgow-specific. The only third thing that I would say, and it ties in with Transmission, is about the decolonisation work that they've done. This is me trying to end on a positive note. There is just a huge amount of heavy lifting that that Committee have done and it is still having impact now. Their changes are about what is viable in terms of this city, who it is for. I think we're going to see the effects of that for a long time.

MJ: What have you noticed that distinguishes the production and circulation of historic or contemporary moving image work from that of the UK or elsewhere? Does work move differently here?

MLY: I think it's more like there are certain circuits that are very small and intimate and I wouldn't underestimate the work produced in Orkney having an impact, the work that circulates in the context of what is show at the Edinburgh International Film Festival being also a very specific thing. It's more like there are these islands where something gets caught in the stream and goes downriver—so many terrible mixed metaphors—but there are ways in

which Scotland is full of islands, Glasgow being also a quite hermetically sealed place at moments. But it also has elements of a larger city and the interchanges that represents for incoming artists. It's interesting to me that Edinburgh doesn't really, to my knowledge, have that and I think it's about the affordability of that city.

MJ: It's funny how these geographies carve up definitions of moving image that are so different and oppositional.

MLY: Just to add to that, it's about who it's for. I feel like a lot of the communities here regardless of whether it's like Glasgow or Inverness, I feel like a lot of people are showing it to show to their friends—it's made in direct response to a community. This is probably something that Jamie would also agree with, certainly Charlotte. Whereas in a place like London that is not the intention, it's much more outward than that and I'm not saying outward as a positive thing, it's just about forms of address. The form of address is going to completely affect the content of the work.

MJ: Do you think there is any value in discussing moving image through a national framework like 'Scottish'? Is that a useful adjective?

MLY: Yeah, I think primarily for practical reasons to do not just with geography but also to do with policy, to understand that the structure of Creative Scotland is completely different to Arts Council England and is very different also to something like Canada Council, or the way that grants work in the EU more generally. Of course, the funding structures are going to affect the ways in which work can or cannot be made. For that reason itself it is important. I also think that quite self-sustaining communities within Glasgow, that are very particular, and need to be understood in relation to Glasgow as a city of certain historical economics that is different to London. I mean you can say that anywhere is specific but if you were able to group a set of productions, geography doesn't seem like such a bad place to start as long as you understand that people are flowing in and out of that.

MJ: Relatedly, do you see nationhood played out in work as a subject?

MLY: Yeah. Or a rejection of nationhood, or a search for something else. I think the Venice project *SaF05* [Charlotte Prodger, 2019] was made under those considerations, and you could say the same of Rachel Maclean the biennial prior though in a more explicit way. I think it's really interesting to think about separatism and the politics of identity within recent moving image work created in Scotland and the political context that we're in right now. I mean separatism not as an actual practicable philosophy but as a kind of absolute that might be able to tell you something about difference. Duncan Marquiss just sent me this new work that he'd made, a six-minute film [*Mirror Test*, 2020], it's not finished yet but that work to me is so much about this current political moment, I feel like it has this level of quite observation that is absolutely about listening to what's going on right now. I think that is very much a feeling with Brexit and a potential Scottish independence referendum around the corner—and the political affiliations of artists in Scotland.

MJ: The same question but shifted from content to container, maybe talking about curation and festivals and infrastructure: is there a 'Scottishness' to that, to the way people organise events or curate, does that have a nationalised dimension?

MLY: I haven't noticed. It's a really interesting question. I would say I haven't noticed because the answer is probably not. I think that there is something about a durational event,

with a projector with a bunch of people in a room that always creates a similar scenario: hosting, showing, sharing. There's always alcohol, you know, and there's also a certain sense of subculture within that set up which has always made me feel at home, whether or not it's Berlin or New York.

MJ: I guess the Glasgow Miracle narrative would have it that the home-gallery and showing work to your friends is specific to here but you would disagree?

MLY: Yeah, I would disagree. The reasons people have been showing in their homes is because of the failure of institutions. Perversely, a kind of neoliberal narrative has celebrated that as a unique identifier.

MJ: Who do you think the local stakeholders are in Scotland's moving image ecology?

MLY: Oh wow, this is a really like a question that reminds me of the LUX Scotland funding application days. I guess I wouldn't put it in such neoliberal terms. I would put it in terms of that you can't really necessarily always separate out audience and creators because there are—and this again is a Glasgow context—there are these interdependencies that produce conditions that are the same within all of these people. Of course, the funders are in a different position but I think that those are the only people who are significantly different from everybody else we're talking about. So far, they've seen fit to give money to it, which is a good thing. I mean it's really cheesy when you say community, but its key. It's not like an exhibition where you open the door and somebody drifts in and out without the artist or curator being present. There's an eventfulness to moving image, which is really important in facilitating other things happening. Not even about the work, just people being in the same room together that allows different networks to occur and different conversations to take place. I think that's pretty liberating, that you can create a work that does another thing that has nothing to do with itself. This is the condition of showing moving image work. At the same time, I watch a lot of stuff on Vimeo but these are again things that are shared with a communication around it and a care. I think that can't be underestimated. It goes back to something that Ben [Cook] has always said, and that I've often reiterated, which is that moving image is the most heavily networked medium of art that you can be involved in. I think it produces dependencies, and I don't think that's necessarily bad, it's the nature of a social endeavour.

MJ: I often think about that in relationship to the market or lack thereof and how markets create an exclusivity of communication and moving image doesn't have that. I can email a filmmaker but I can't necessarily email a painter, even in that very basic way.

MLY: Whenever things are shown at a film festival or at someone's house, or you send a Vimeo of your latest film, there's always this idea of hosting it or introducing it when in fact with sculpture or painting, the artist is not often required to be present. There's still like a present-ness or an authorial voice that's still considered quite important when it comes to moving image but it's not like that's the be all and end all. Alexis Mitchell was talking about collaboration and authorship with Richy Carey the other night [*Bugs and Beasts Before the Law*, 1 Feb 2020, CCA] about their work dynamic, and while you could say that Richy 'just' did the sound, it's half of the project. The interplays between that level of authorship is quite important.

MJ: Maybe the package it's delivered in is always prefaced, that's nice. An optimistic question—I think maybe we're coming to an end soon: what does artists' moving image in Scotland need to enhance its profile and become more sustainable.

MLY: Money. I think it has everything else. It has been producing despite or in spite of the lack of money. I don't know how that money is going to come by or where the Government will get the confidence to do that. I feel like it's shown again and again that it's got a huge profile and talent. There's not really much more the community can do to prove itself. When Charlotte won the Turner Prize she became 'the iPhone artist' but the iPhone thing was practical, if she'd had a high-end camera she would have produced a different piece of work but it's about affordability and we were talking again about what I perceive to be neoliberal gaslighting: 'Glasgow! In people's houses!' It's like we have to be careful to not celebrate all of the limitations because the limitations don't necessarily always produce the work, work is produced in spite of the limitations. But imagine where you could be if you just had a bit more money. Isn't it interesting that for personal and financial reasons I stopped 'working' in Scotland, although I am here and I am still working. I was employed on a US salary and now I'm employed on a German salary and I get my freelance work from Italy and Spain. This goes back to the thing I said at the very beginning: just because you're good doesn't mean you're good enough to earn a living here, or that it will ever be enough.

MJ: Yeah, you see that in every list of rejected applications.

MLY: Do you see how I took your really positive question and I just—

I. Lucy McKenzie

Marcus Jack: To start, maybe you could talk to me a bit about your professional interaction with moving image in a timeline, starting with art school—have you worked with it, exhibited it?

Lucy McKenzie: I mean I've done a little bit of video work, usually connected to something else because I'm an extremely two dimensional—not even three dimensional—brain, so four dimensions as in time as well, is just beyond me. If I have done it, it has usually been as a by-product of say a performance, I remember making a film in 2003, *Oblique Composition*, with Paulina Olowka, where basically we just wanted a soundtrack to play in the room and thought the best way to do that would be to have a video playing. We did things as a pretext, but have always considered video art extremely important and when I studied at Dundee there was the new media department and I knew a lot of people who studied there, I was in a lot of weird art films. I remember having to be one half of Rodin's *The Kiss* covered in hair gel, to be scanned and filmed.

MJ: Do you know who made that?

LM: I can't remember. One girl who I was friendly with, and was in one of my photo pieces, then went on to form Rockstar Games. That's my claim to fame.

MJ: What year did you start art school?

LM: I started art school in 1995. From Glasgow, applied to The Glasgow School of Art but didn't get in, so went to [Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design] and graduated in 1999. Moved back to Glasgow and stayed here until 2006 when I moved to Belgium and I've been there ever since.

Started Flourish Studios within a few months of moving to Glasgow. There was this great old building on Robertson Street and The Modern Institute were already there, maybe a couple of other arts organisations, maybe not, but there were a couple of other strange businesses like the Freemasons regalia outfitter, taxidermy, 'invisible menders.' As you know, everyone's always looking for studios and enough of us got together to divided it up, it was around that time, maybe within a year or two of us moving in, that the CCA were chucking out a whole lot of stuff that they didn't need and of course people were working as installers there so we got a clunky old video projector and a screen and a bunch of really nice old wooden chairs, so we had the tools to do something.

MJ: So that was 2001?

LM: The first group of events at Flourish were—I wasn't very involved—it was Sophie Macpherson, Alex Frost and maybe a couple others. It's been a while and I don't want to leave anyone out but definitely Sophie. The first year I think we showed things like Annika Strom, Oliver Payne & Nick Relph, Duncan Campbell, Fred Pedersen, Joanne Tatham and Tom O'Sullivan. I've got them all somewhere, I'll send you a list of everything. Basically, the rent was covered by all the people sharing and sub-dividing it. We were set up as a charity with a constitution cut-and-pasted from Transmission. We got our rates paid and we had pretty cheap studio rental, also for some reason we never ever paid an electricity bill, I don't know why. I don't know how that happened but we never got any bills. For a while

when we moved in we had things like a dehumidifier and that ran a lot, when we had bands playing that would blow the fuse box but we never paid the bills, so that was also a win.

MJ: How frequent was this programming, was it quite *ad hoc* or was it very structured?

LM: I did it two years in a row, programmed over a month for every weekend a month. I think I even got a little bit of a grant to go and visit some people in places like the north of England to invite them to do things. I was really into doing silk-screening in the studio—completely homemade, using organza screens—and I really enjoyed making the posters. Part of the motivation was to throw a party but also to make posters and see what they looked like by putting them round town: the pleasure to see something so nicely handmade put around town as a flyer, I always thought that was nice, to do a four-print silkscreen and just leave it pinned to a noticeboard.

MJ: With a slight mystery about it. I mean I guess some of the legacy of Flourish is cemented in the design: MoMA has that suite of posters?

LM: I think they do, and also the Museum Ludwig in Cologne. I included those four posters, from the Flourish season which was in 2003, I think. 2002 or 2003. I used them as an artwork in an installation called *The Integrity Gap* which was part of my show *Brian Eno* at the Neuer Achener Kunstverein in 2003 because I wanted—the installation was a hand-painted interior of a neo-classical building with pillars and fake marble, tromp l’oeil—it was the first time I’d ever done that—the exhibition itself was called *Brian Eno* just because I liked the cheek of it. I’m always interested in appropriation, like comedy or satire it only works if it’s punching up. To just call your exhibition after this super famous symbol of high culture, quality, really legitimised and here’s a nobody giving two fingers, ‘haha, Brian Eno.’ Then to put it in this neo-classical room and use the posters as stand-ins within that interior is just like two positions: you have on one side an artist-run space and on the other, edifice, authority, institution—which is like marble. So, I included them in that, so they have been shown in different places. Another reason for the mythology could also be that Franz Ferdinand wrote Flourish a bit into their own narrative which got on my nerves a little bit because it was so much this typical band origin story about coming from this thing and I thought that was used in slightly dubious way because it was about selling a very mainstream band—maybe that’s part of it as well.

MJ: What did the events consist of?

LM: We had live music, performance, film showings, readings, we had slide shows mixed with other things, often a combination of all of them together. Never anything exhibited, one exhibition that was staged: we asked this artist called Andrew Gannon who now lives in Edinburgh I think, but at the time was based in Manchester, where he’s from—he had an art space in his pocket because he only had one arm so he had this pocket that was a ‘disused space,’ as he put it, he didn’t need it. So, we invited him to come and he asked a local artist to do an exhibition in his pocket so this artist called John Mullan made a sculpture that looked like a perfume bottle. Sandy was a very sociable guy, so it was a pretext to hang out and talk to people and talk about the work, it was a lovely project.

I used it as a bit of an excuse to get in touch with some heroes of mine, people like Linder Sterling came and performed. We could never offer anything like a proper fee. I once asked the gallery that I work with in London, Cabinet, to curate or to co-curate an evening, so they could help a bit with the money and it meant we got Marc Camille Chaimowicz who came

and did a performance. He was at that time in his sixties, I feel awkward about asking someone like that to come up and stay in my spare cupboard. We once asked Cerith Wyn Evans to curate a film programme, it was really beautiful. It was pretty loose and so many artists also did music, DJing. Susanne Oberbeck had her band called No Bra—the band is still going—and that was the one which was women-only which you're probably quite interested in.

MJ: Yeah, I've heard about that one in particular. Are there any more people working with film and video that you could extract from them?

LM: Luke Fowler, showed his film connected to R.D. Laing, and that was connected to live performance by Phil Eaglesham, who was a bit of a cult figure, he'd been in this band called the Stretchheads. I was in a band with him for a wee bit called Fried Bread. These queer noise guys. I remember Luke did that, we had Cerith's film night, Bonnie Camplin, Cosey Fanny Tutti showed a film. Probably the one that was the most carefully done was the women-only night because for me I thought it was a very interesting proposal to give to artists, to say like, 'what do you want to do for a gendered audience?' It makes a difference. At the time I'd written a little story for a friend, an artist called Paulina Olowaska, I'd written a piece of fiction, part of which was set in a women's members club and we'd had the plan to turn it into an audio play. I did the recording that night to have as its background all these women's voices and an artist, Lucile Desamory, who is a filmmaker that I've worked with subsequently—she did a reading. It's very hard for me to separate my own practice from organising; artworks melting into each other. Cosey, I had wanted to release the piece that she made for the night. I was intending to release on an LP—I have a small record label called Decemberism—and that audio play was going to be on one side and Cosey's piece on the other. In the end the record didn't happen, I wasn't happy with the audio piece and I'd stopped working with Paulina. I just didn't want to go forward with it but Cosey's piece was great, she still shows it now and I am proud to think that somehow the women-only night was part of the genesis of it. Not to claim anything from her, the conversations we had about it were really important to me.

MJ: There's a deep pleasure in that kind of commissioning. Did you meet any resistance to having a women-only audience?

LM: What do you think! It was very mild, it was like, 'oh aye, that sounds very interesting, yeah I'd like to go to that but I can't.' I'm sure there was stuff about it but those guys were too scared to ever really voice it. I just didn't care, one evening.

MJ: How did you keep this sustainable, was there money coming from somewhere?

LM: How did we do it? We got some money from SAC, really to cover the PA, trains, tiny fee for participants and I put a lot of my own money in and also my own labour, I mean at the studio the lift was off at the weekends: everything had to be humped up six flights of stairs at the weekend. We sold beer and made a bit of money that way but absolutely like sellotaped together and I always felt bad that we couldn't offer artists particularly good projection conditions and things like that. Everyone just understood that it was done out of goodwill, everyone likes coming to Glasgow to do stuff because they know Glasgow is a great audience, everyone has a great time.

MJ: And who is the 'we' at this point? It's you, Sophie?

LM: Who would it have been... God, whoever was around. There was a band practising in Flourish for a while, Uncle John & Whitelock. Who is 'we'? Anyone I could beg to help. Everyone used to stay at my place. After the women-only night there was something like eight people staying at my house, I had this cupboard that people could sleep in and my flatmate was really into it because he liked staying in anyway and used to like having all these really nice girls coming and hanging out. How did we fund it and who is 'we'? The first one was done as a bit of a committee but afterwards it was completely my baby, but all friends chipped in. When we first got the space we hosted Punish there, Punish was the graphic designer Robert Johnson and an architect called Ewan Imrie, who were both practising artists at the time and on the committee of Transmission during the period when I was going there. Punish was just really hard music and it was all lit by street lamps, which then Mark Leckey absolutely stole, but also, I think, credits.

MJ: Yeah, you still get a street lamp in every degree show.

LM: Oh, absolutely.

MJ: Who was the audience going to these things?

LM: I haven't lived in Glasgow for a long time but I'd imagine it's still similar today. You have a really broad constituent. You've got music people, art scene people, a lot of generation crossover because of like big sisters, younger brothers, teachers and students. Because of my dad, I was hanging out in the art scene from a very young age so I really have an experience of the art scene in the 1980s through the 1990s. Somehow, maybe these posters, I think people came because they saw the posters which is always my dream because people would turn up with this beautiful poster like folded up in their pocket, saying like, 'found this, what is it.'

MJ: You wouldn't get that now, posters don't work!

LM: No, of course not.

MJ: Your moving to Dundee didn't really affect your Glasgow network, you knew people in Glasgow anyway?

LM: I was in a band, or before art school I was in several bands and the first year at least of art school I had to come back every weekend anyway to practice. Part of the reason—Dundee is really boring, it's a really boring city, which is good if you want to work, and so many people from Glasgow also went to Dundee, a lot of artist who were doing really interesting things afterwards studied in Dundee—so there has just always been this bus up and down.

MJ: Were you aware of any sort of equivalent artist-led happenings in Dundee?

LM: Yeah, I was a member of Generator which was there, and involved in a few of the projects. In Glasgow it's seeped into the history of the place whereas in Dundee, I got the feeling that things had to start and reset every few years, there wasn't an awful lot of continuity because you didn't have the same number of people staying afterwards in the same way. Certainly, that was super fun to do things there and it was great having people like Cathy Wilkes who I remember being with at some meetings, really kind and inspiring. Just after graduating I went with Generator to a meeting of artist-run groups in the south of Italy, like a big support meeting/group *Progetto Oreste*, which was really fun. One thing in

Dundee was that we were actually taught, not in any structured way, just inculcated that you're never going to make any money from your work in Scotland, there's just not a private market, if you want to keep doing what you want to do, you've got to learn to document your work, write about your work as well as you can, and apply for grants and scholarships and this kind of thing.

I remember already beginning to apply for little travel grants when I was in third year at art school and when I tell people now about that, it just blows their mind, but it wasn't about some creepy professional practice learning about networking or something, it was really practical. When I left art school I knew how to take slides of my work and had already written about it; we were forced to write about it a lot. You came out pretty well equipped. Also when I graduated, there was this thing set up where you could sign on, in Bridgeton, ran by Patricia Fleming [Fuse], where you could get a studio and come in and sign on once a month and you would be considered looking for work as an artist, then you could go abroad. It was amazing. I did that for a year and then got my first solo show and began my professional life where I could sustain myself. I really feel for artists today, we had it pretty good with the dole twenty years ago.

MJ: I guess to match those timelines, when did you get gallery representation, what year was that?

LM: I was really lucky. Part of that thing of applying for grants, we were also encouraged to apply to things like the New Contemporaries and there were a few things that were for graduates or young artists. There was a thing in Norwich called EASTinternational, set up by Lynda Morris where she would invite an artist or a curator, they would in turn invite someone else and together those two individuals would—and you could submit your work—and they would go through that and then at the Norwich art school, once the degree show was down, they would take over the school with this huge group show of all these different people. I applied the year that Peter Doig chose it and I'd already been going to London a bit—I was going out with an artist called Keith Farquhar, he was a bit older than me and he'd been at Edinburgh and then gone down to Goldsmiths and been in things like New Contemporaries, I knew him through music. And so, I was already going down and hanging out with him and he knew people because he'd been at Goldsmiths, so I think Peter knew, or there was some connection. I was really lucky I got chosen for that, and not only was I in the show but I won the prize. I won the money to pay back my student debt and he also said to a gallery, 'check her out.'

MJ: Was that a significant amount of money?

LM: It was £5,000, it was amazing, I graduated debt free and that gallery, Cabinet, I started to work with them immediately and got a second gallery in Germany a few months later, that I'm still with today. I've had it pretty golden, long-term—and the good thing with Cabinet, or with both of those galleries, is that they were really open to other projects, they would always be interested in your friends. They were pretty open-minded, it was pretty special.

MJ: Just to jump back to Flourish and round that up. Do you know why it stopped?

LM: I was living for months at a time abroad, in New York then Brussels, and I moved permanently to Belgium in 2006. The studio continued for a while but the building was not being maintained and emptying, there was redevelopment all around us. I moved to Belgium just at this moment when things were kind of changing in Glasgow and I was a bit sceptical,

or not sceptical, but I wasn't sure how I would respond to these changes. It was the time when King Street was getting rebranded as an arts quarter; Transmission was getting done up and all of that, new building work was getting done. I knew that even getting funding for Flourish might get harder because we weren't in the right part of town. GI was beginning and I was always a bit... culture has to come up from underneath. When the city tries to instigate or use art for tourism, I'm very sceptical about that kind of thing though it's widespread of course. When I left was also when Glasgow changed a bit in that sense.

MJ: So those were the drivers, but why Belgium?

LM: I went to Belgium for a few months in 2004, a lot of things I was interested in seem to keep crossing over there, things to do with fashion, comic books, techno, architecture. I went there for a few months and loved it, realised that it had things in common with Glasgow and it's a capital city but it's pretty small. Around 2006, I just thought it's time. Everyone has to leave their hometown at some point; there's definitely something about anonymity that helps creativity. I'm quite critical of scenes, art scenes. Having been in the music scene in Glasgow and then in the art scene, then seeing the way that scenes have a tendency to police themselves and I think if you're an ambitious artist there's just something to be said about going somewhere and being anonymous. I have to say that there's always this thing as well where if you didn't work with The Modern Institute, and even if you did, what happens if you've shown in every institution, then where do you go. I would rather live on my wits as a stranger than be a big fish in a small town. Having said that, Glasgow is so important to me, through the fashion label [Atelier EB]. I'm always happy to come back and do things, it means so much to me. I still think about it and it's still my context but I think there's something really important about that distance. It's a common experience, most artists, we feel alienated anyway.

MJ: I can empathise with that a lot.

LM: Remember that Glasgow was a bit of a different place when I was there, it was extremely blokey. Have you ever read the book *Phantom Village* [1990] about Glasgow art? One woman, Sam Ainsley is mentioned *in passing*. Because I had worked with the photographer Richard Kern as a nude model, if I got attacked or criticised for being a mouthy ambitious woman it was always with a gendered put down—'aye, we've all seen McKenzie's hole.' Things like that, to try to shame you into being quiet. It didn't work naturally.

MJ: Even in 2006 that was a force?

LM: Oh my God, yeah. There's something similar in Belgium. There are meagre resources being fought over and it can get really competitive. It's really tough in small towns where there's not enough to go around and it's a bit of a fish bowl. What was so beautiful in Scotland was that there were always little project spaces, even in small towns like Stirling and Dundee, that was always really healthy. [...]

I had privilege to do something like Flourish because I could live from my art. I got off the dole in 2000, but I've always seen it as a slight obligation that if you do have the privilege, fucking use it. Because of these connections to London and abroad, to get interesting things up, make connections. Not about showing people how it can be done but always trying to integrate. Also, people love coming to Glasgow. I remember Donatella, Mark Leckey's band, playing up here to a really tough Glasgow crowd and these guys were just not having it, could not handle a guy in batty riders and dayglo tights on stage. Yeah, always fun.

MJ: I wonder if you could talk a bit more about the scene or how it felt? Were you involved in Transmission?

LM: No, no. I wasn't even a member I don't think. But I of course knew lots of people there over the years in different capacities. Curated one show there called *It May Be A Year Of Thirteen Moons But It's Still The Year Of Culture* [2000] which I curated with Keith Farquhar.

MJ: Was that as Charisma?

LM: Yeah. I guess because I read *Lanark* by Alasdair Gray in around 2001—I'd planned to move to Berlin in 2001 and was already back home within three months because I'd read *Lanark* in Berlin and just loved it so much and found it so inspiring, to read a book set in your hometown, so came back right away. Also, Berlin in the winter is not fun, you know: move in the summer. I'd studied in Germany and that had been interesting, just to be somewhere else and to realise how much the taste of those around you, the art that you made, was so specific to your education and where you came from. To go to Germany where they had a very different idea about painting or student life, not that it was better but it was different and I just found that a revelation just to be somewhere else.

Because I'd grown up in an arty household, where there'd been Alasdair Gray books on the shelf and Ken Currie drawings on the wall, I had a sort of personal connection to the art of the 1980s in Glasgow that had been resigned to the dustbin by all those cool, chic, conceptual boys. I just didn't feel any connection to them, personally, extreme vaginal dryness on my part. So, we showed Steven Campbell in Transmission in 2000, alongside Albert Oehlen who also an artist who came up in the 1980s where there's a different kind of relationship to that. I curated shows with the work of John Byrne and Alasdair Gray at a time when young artists weren't interested in the work at all. I've always been interested in agitating ideas about received notions of taste, value and how style is connected to value.

MJ: Yeah, and I guess that continues through Atelier EB and 'Mockintosh.'

LM: I thought about the way when I was a recent graduate and being invited to be in all these groups shows about brilliant Glasgow and I remember being in one show where they organised a football match of the German artists and the British artists. Ok, this is really saying what this is about, a football match? I'd done all this work in the late 1990s, early 2000s connected to Mackintosh and 'Mockintosh' jewellery especially, and the idea of how that kind of high culture is then transformed into mass-market middle-class jewellery. There's a great essay on it by Juliet Kinchen in our *IOT II* catalogue.

I was really wondering how something like Roddy Buchanan and his men in football strips is seen as 'authentic culture' but Mockintosh jewellery isn't; and of course you know why that is, because it's frivolous, it's feminine, whereas this salt-of-the-earth, working-class male—and I've got nothing against those artists, I only question the fact that that was the work championed by institutions while other work wasn't. I've found it interesting that I've always showed in Edinburgh and never invited to show in Glasgow by institutions, it was always Edinburgh and maybe it was because Mackintosh was too close or something, I'm not sure.

MJ: Or if there's sense of femininity and masculinity attached to those two cities. Which is bizarre. I wonder if you could speak more subjectively, as an audience member in that time: are there events or things that happened which really stuck out?

LM: Of course. I remember being so impressed by the work of Joanne Tatham and Tom O'Sullivan, I thought it was so ambitious and so interesting. Their shows at the Changing Room and Tramway, events organised by Sarah Tripp, their volume of fiction. Transmission was also interesting at that time, Ewan Imrie and Robert Johnson were on the committee and they were into music so there were a lot of cassettes put out, music events, bands. I curated a show called *The Best Book About Pessimism I Ever Read* [2002] for the Kunstverein in Braunschweig where I invited quite a few artists from Glasgow as well as other. John Byrne and Alasdair Gray, as an older generation, then Lucy Skaer, Joanne and Tom, Keith Farquhar, Ronnie Heeps—he was an interesting character, he was a former lightshow expert for the group The Shaman, who'd then gone into painting, so he was a bit of an old acid head with hair down to his arse, who made these really psychedelic paintings. I was always interested in about breaking these rules of generations, to have all these older figures who were maybe coming in from it sideways, combining it with young women and different people. I loved working with Lucy Skaer and Henry VIII's Wives were great; Tramway did a lot of great things in the early 2000s. [...] So yeah, Lucy Skaer, Joanne and Tom, Ewan Imrie, Alan Michael's work I really loved. I really looked up to him at art school and he put on a couple of great shows with Alex Frost. And I always liked Michael Fullerton's work, it seemed to true to his experience at art school, bridging the eras of figurative painting and conceptual art.

MJ: If I could steer you slightly towards moving image, in its expanded sense. Is there anything like that?

LM: Yeah, let me think. Filmmaking or video. To be honest not so much. There was a lot of performance, like Elizabeth Go, which was a group of the Tompkins twins, Cathy [Wilkes], Victoria [Morton] and Sarah Tripp—women that I looked up to. Having them as teachers at Dundee was really important for representation. Yeah, film and video, let me think. [...] I studied with Charlotte [Prodger], we were life models together. This has been really brilliant to see her get the attention she deserves. Katy Dove! Katy Dove was a colleague from art school, collaborated with. Her animations were gorgeous and then you can relate that bit to Margaret Tait. I'd never heard of Margaret Tait until probably, quite late. Through this Belgian artist Lucile Desamory who had spent time in Glasgow and was very close to Luke Fowler, she showed me her work.

MJ: Rosalind Nashashibi, Nashashibi/Skaer?

LM: Not really. I was in a film for an artist called Anita di Bianco, she was an American artist who had connections to Glasgow. So, I was in a film with one of the guys from Henry VIII's Wives, filmed in Grizedale. I was in that reading really long lover letters, no idea what it was about.

MJ: Could we maybe cycle back to the collaborations with Richard Kern, I don't know a lot about them. Could you tell me about what that was, when that happened, where it lived?

LM: One of the first weeks of art school I went down, probably hitchhiked, with a boyfriend. He had a retrospective at the BFI, I think, and at the Q&A in my typical fashion immediately asked him some extremely provocative and judgemental question. He thought, 'oh, God, who is this nightmare,' then afterwards we talked, got on really well, and I invited him to Glasgow. I was a huge fan of his work, mainly because I loved the women in his films. All these amazing figures from the New York underground scene, from Karen Finlay to Lydia

Lunch to Lung Leg, and even though when we'd met it was the 1990s and he'd moved on to doing more stills photography and doing straight up porn to make money, I just loved these women. I invited him to Glasgow, saying I'm sure I can find you models, and in the end, we didn't find a lot of models—it turned out not as many of my friends were as interested as I was, in being photographed naked. Stayed friends. Then I wrote the foreword for one of his books because my work was getting a certain amount of attention also gave him a certain audience or legitimacy because a woman artist had written the foreword, of course that makes people think it can't be that bad if all these women like it. We always kept in touch and I would go out to New York, get my flights paid in the summer and do some shoots for magazines like *Barely Legal*, *Leg Show*, and always kept in touch. Then I was in New York in 2013 organising a season of events at a place called The Artist's Institute which is the project space connected to Hunter College, and he so openly said, 'do you want to make a film,' and so I did a storyboard for this Ms Marple crime film [*The Girl Who Followed Marple*, 2014] and we made it together. I'm not a filmmaker but it was like, at the time I was very interested in the structure of crime fiction and more like how that compares to painting or more methodical kinds of illusionistic painting, the way that crime works is that it hides the structure in this kind of super-consumable trickery.

MJ: And it's an advert as well?

LM: Yeah, an advert for the fashion label. Everything leads into other projects. He is someone who has had a lot of questions to think about since #metoo and it's been really interesting to talk to someone who is a bit on the other side of the conversation—someone who's had to think, 'wait, am I the bad guy?' I've really appreciated how open and reflective he's been. I've always been interested in these kinds of power structures and the way privacy or identity or sexuality all get connected. I wrote an essay for an art magazine called *Texte zur Kunst* about my experiences in the art scene, connected to #metoo or connected to sexual harassment in the art world. It changed for me from being an undergrad or a young artist, to then becoming a teacher, and the way it shifted depending on how much access you had to power. I'd be fascinated if it was something having an impact on Scotland because my memory was of somewhere that is really about being a down-to-earth bloke in the pub and anything else was a bit outside the norm and you could be a bit of a frustrated person if you were into queer culture and feminism, but it has changed I think.

MJ: I think so, there are still foibles and blunders of varying levels of public and private. I guess that's a nice bridge to thinking more about—my research is framed by this national outline, Scotland, as if that matters—I wonder if you have any views on: is there a 'Scottishness' in art, does that exist? In the work that people make or in the way people show the work? Do you find value in being Scottish, as a frame?

LM: There's something liberating about being from a culture that doesn't have a grand narrative of history. Micro-narratives or alternative narratives, that's all we've got in Scotland. It's something I've reflected on because I live in Belgium, so when I see things in Belgium that I like and I identify with as a Scot it makes me realise what it means to be Scottish. Like Belgium, a lot of interesting things have come through popular culture, not like in France with this history of division between high culture, low culture, legitimate literature and folk culture, even though they absolutely appreciate folk culture as well.

I always see comparisons with the Soviet Union, you know, The People's Palace in Glasgow! I think that that comes with good sides and bad sides. I remember when GoMA opened in the mid-1990s with this remit to be for the masses and be a bit against elite culture, for instance

you have the Dali painting but also it means that you have a certain lack of sophistication in staging things. Everything that's good in Scotland comes from normal life, folk culture, pop culture. It really makes sense to me that you have a very vibrant music scene that feeds into the art scene rather than say, it coming from academia down. To survive, to sustain itself it has to be quite pluralistic, so it's quite tolerant of lots of different art forms.

There's not a huge sense of in-and-out, you know, the ones that are on the inside looking out. As I said before there is a paucity of resources, which means that things have to be very modest and I think that people deal with a subject matter that it often quite down-to-earth. It differs from somewhere like London or other metropolitan cities where you have this whole luxury industry, you also don't have a lot of work being made here for purely, decoration. A lot of the audience is in public spaces so you have a lot of conceptual art, but maybe it means you have a certain argument that you don't really need to have between decorative or not, or commercial or not. I don't know, I haven't been here for so long that I'm not too sure. Certainly, I always felt that being a painter was not some kind of rejection of content or concept, it was that it could be just as sharp as stuff that was purely conceptual. But, I also knew that with a painting a lay person could enjoy it, maybe they wouldn't understand it on the same level that someone on the art scene who understand all the in-jokes would, but they still could enjoy it as a beautiful object.

MJ: I wonder if along similar lines, although maybe you're not best placed to answer this because you don't now live in Scotland, but have you seen changes—maybe from the late 1990s to now, or until you left—in the way things are made, which people are making?

LM: I certainly find it interesting to see a re-emergence of 1980s painting, of course when I was here that was just the un-coolest thing in the world. People like me or Michael Fullerton, Alan Michael, it was seen as a bit odd, this painterly—even though it was full of concept, it was seen as very like academic in some ways, and people found that as a sort of either/or. That's totally gone now. I did see, before I left, a negative impact of The Modern Institute on the work that people made. Because there was this very visible gallery, people in art school started to make things that look like the kind of things they showed there, which was a real switch in aesthetics and I don't think for the better. All that day-glow pink and triangles.

MJ: Do you remember The Modern Institute early on, before it was a commercial gallery?

LM: Yeah, I remember it when Charles Esche was there. It was very cool, you used to have Jonnie Wilkes and Jonnie's shadow falls very far over it because Jonnie was, is a very interesting artist, just like Cathy, whose sensibility shapes the aesthetic choices of it. It did feel quite glamorous to have this successful gallery there. We all craved an open channel to places like London because you just had to, to survive. I have to say, I'm not particularly focused on contemporary art any more, I mean I make it, but I'm so interested in history and design and literature, so I'm not often coming to exhibitions when I'm in Glasgow. [...]

I'd also like to mention how important *Variant* was to me. With our *IOT II* catalogue, it was really important for me to ask Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt to write something about cultural policy and shifts. I always remember the *Variant* where there'd been this hideous campaign around the city—'Scotland with Style'—and people had been going around putting stickers on them like, 'nae mare pish,' sixty per cent of Scottish families don't even own a car, don't

give us this shit—brilliant, and I always appreciated Leigh French’s position. They were such an important counterpoint to purely visual art.

MJ: Yeah, I feel there is a sense that that kind of critical ecology, there’s no spine in it anymore. There’s *MAP* which is all but defunded, and that’s it!

LM: I always liked in the Transmission newsletter, you had little bits of writing and reviews. My memory of Transmission, I just remember that an artist would be in town to have a show at Transmission and somebody would just call you up and say, ‘oh, this person’s here, you know lots of weird old cafés, do you want to just take them on an architecture tour?’ And you’d just be like, ‘yep’— people would be coming to dinner, bands coming to town to play at Optimo or at The Art School, you’d just get a call and there would be such a warm welcome and I hope that still happens because that was really important in cementing Glasgow’s reputation as such an important art city. [...]

I had an experience a few years ago when Kelvingrove wanted to buy a piece of mine and I made them a painting then it just all went really sour and I ended up not giving it to them. Atelier EB were trying to borrow a work from them for the *Passer-by* exhibition and I guess I assumed that once you make a piece of work for not much money, it’s really partially a gift—that you would be able to have a conversation with them about borrowing from the collection. But we were refused and felt fobbed off. I just thought I don’t want my work to be treated like this, if someone else wanted to borrow it, this belongs to us, the public, it’s our museum. Of course, there’s just no money and people not paid enough. I always try and get a balance between doing things for privately funded places and publicly funded, and everything in between to not get used to the comfort of private money and not be ground down by the problems of public institutions where there’s no budget. I remember when the CCA was the Third Eye Centre, yeah, it was great.

You also have to keep in perspective as well, I mean I’ve done so much research about how artists survived in the Soviet Union where there was no visibility, there was no money for nothing, there was censorship; or you know the people at the Bauhaus, the kids that studied at the Bauhaus were so poor, they were basically dying they were so hungry, you’ve got to keep your own grievances in perspective.

MJ: I think we’ve probably covered most of this. We’ve talked about nationhood and national frameworks. I guess I’m really trying to mine info about resource and money, but you’re not a filmmaker. Have you seen any changes in the way that funding has worked in Scotland from any sort of angle?

LM: My only experience is through doing Atelier EB, and we put on film nights. We showed a night of film documentaries by a filmmaker called Murray Grigor, who made tonnes of great films. We’ve been really lucky to work with a great group called Panel, Lucy McEachan and Catriona Duffy, who also have worked a bit in film and we’ve just seen over the years applications getting more and more bureaucratic. But at the same time, I also don’t really believe in knowing the right person and just getting a backhand.

I once had a very awkward encounter with someone from the SAC who had wanted to come to my studio and buy some work, not through the gallery, and I had got cold feet and stood them up because I was a bit worried about the ethics of it—and I remember this person brought it up in the phone call to tell me that I hadn’t got my funding application, and it was the last time I ever applied for funding as an individual. Also, I didn’t have to apply anymore

because I was financially independent through my painting, so I was in a luxury position to not have to think about something like that. But I always understand when artists do, absolutely. With Atelier we've been kind of lucky to work with Cat and Lucy who are very experienced with all of that and we see how hard they have to work even just for a bit of security and their choice not to be part of an institution. I would love to see Scotland have more small, flexible grants because that's what you need—it can't be money for the Fruitmarket and nothing for anyone else. They've got to be smart and know that the lifeblood of Scotland is like these micro-grants. I'm really happy that there's been an understanding that craft has to be supported well and I think also Panel are great to understand how the crossovers between historical research, Scottish Screen, fashion as a commercial thing but also as an artistic thing—we really appreciate their openness.

J. Stephanie Smith

Marcus Jack: Could you walk me through your professional career as it relates to moving image or video, however you want to call it, starting around art school?

Stephanie Smith: I did my BA Fine Art at the Slade in London and was based in Bruce McLean's studio which was an anything-goes sort of studio, affectionately known as *Concept Corner*. Throughout that time, I was working with sculpture, video and text. Straight from BA, I went to the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, still working with language but moving much more to video and the site of the body. Initially, I was independently making my own video work and making connections with different bodies through that: Film and Video Umbrella in London and by winning an exhibition prize called EAST in Norwich. At the same time, when I was in Amsterdam, I met Eddie [Stewart].

We had just started going out together, embarking on a personal relationship, and then, because we were both working with text in quite different ways—me, related to the body; him, in relation to the political situation in Northern Ireland, where he's from—we were asked to make a two-person show. It was like, 'Oh, no. We're suddenly going to have to talk to each other about our work!' But through that process decided to make something entirely new. We made a piece called *Intercourse* [1993] which is a double projection of spit being spat from one mouth to another. It had both sexual and violent connotations but for us was equally about language or the deconstruction of a kiss. We thought that was maybe a one-off. Eddie came back to Glasgow and started teaching in the painting department, where he'd studied in Glasgow and I was still in Amsterdam. I ended up in Glasgow by default because when I finished in Amsterdam I moved here and that's when we started making more work together, from about 1994.

MJ: Could I pick some years out of what you've already mentioned, so you started the BA in?

SS: I finished my BA in 1991 and then went straight to the Rijksakademie and was there 1991 to 1993. I met Eddie in 1992 and started making work together around then and I moved to Glasgow in 1994.

Even though we were making work together we were still pursuing our independent practices. I was invited to be an artist-in-residence in the Barnes Building—when Pavel Büchler was the Head of Fine Art here, he set up a programme and Martin Boyce and I each got a studio. In response, or as 'pay' for that, you had to do half a day per week teaching; it was amazing because at that time Sculpture and Environmental Art and the MFA were based in the Barnes. That's how I got to know The Glasgow School of Art.

Gradually over that period, the collaborative work generated its own momentum—it was hard to unpick our individual roles any more, it became more exciting for us to work together. I'm not sure the first time we applied for funding but we applied to the Scottish Arts Council, as it then was, jointly as Smith/Stewart, and they said that we couldn't make a collaborative application and that one of us would have to cite ourselves as the lead applicant. We questioned that and said, 'maybe you need to change that? Lots of people are collaborating, it's not an unusual thing.' I think they changed their policy on the back of us being insistent of us going in as an equal partnership rather than saying, 'this is Stephanie Smith who works with Eddie Stewart' or vice versa.

MJ: When might that have been?

SS: That would have been around 1994.

MJ: These two solo practices, at what point did they cease to be active?

SS: Around 1994 or 1995. After *Intercourse* [1993] we then made *Dead Red* [1994] which was a Super 8 film piece. So, about 1995 I'd say for sure. With regard to funding, we got an artist's award from the Scottish Arts Council in 1995/6. Then we got another one in 2001 and another later. Their funding did keep us going. Film and Video Umbrella were equally professionally supportive for a substantial period of time.

MJ: You've both arrived in Glasgow and Eddie studied here?

SS: Eddie did both BA and MFA here, at Glasgow School of Art. [...] I thought I would go back to London after Amsterdam but I've been in Glasgow ever since. I've now been here longer than anywhere else in my life, even longer than being in Manchester, where I'm originally from.

MJ: Is there something about that context that you've found particularly productive or useful?

SS: It felt exciting—so many people coming from all over the place to study here, particularly on the MFA, and people stayed. It wasn't like just parachuting in and leaving, so it felt like a really vibrant art community. The whole *Glasgow Miracle* thing was supposedly going on—but actually it was down to generosity of individuals. I think we met some curators who were primarily coming to see Douglas Gordon, who said, 'will you see these other guys while you're here?' For example, we met Christine van Assche, the video curator from the Pompidou because she was over to see Douglas and he'd pointed her, really generously, at fellow artists who were working with video, and said, 'go and see them while you're here.' We were in a show at the Pompidou [*X/Y: Jeunes artistes, Nouveaux médias*, 1995] out of that which was amazing, so opportunities came from personal networks, as much as institutional help and funding.

MJ: Did they feel really collegiate, mutually supportive, or was there a sense of competition?

SS: It generally felt supportive. I think we've always been a bit on the outside of things, if there was any competitiveness. Charles Esche was at Tramway at that time in the mid-1990s and we had a show there [*Dark Lights*, 1995]. I think it was quite short run—for various reasons, lots of our shows have been quite short runs in Scotland but through Tramway people saw our work and lots of people were visiting Glasgow to see work and visit artists, so even if you weren't in the epicentre of all that people were coming and seeing work here. It was genuinely a good time.

MJ: I've diverted you from the mid-1990s. You've established as a duo and then what happens?

SS: We started having shows and exhibiting internationally. Also around this time, in Glasgow, we met Francis McKee who wrote a few texts for some early publications. I think we met him through Sam Ainsley who was running the MFA. Prior to stuff happening through being based in Glasgow, or through people here, I had already established a working

relationship with Film and Video Umbrella in London, and Steven Bode, who is still the director. They were commissioning work and putting together screening tapes at that time—single-screen stuff—and for one of the programmes that I was invited to be in, I asked if I could also put in a collaborative work, and that introduced them to our work as Smith/Stewart.

We then we started working with them more closely on commissions which, over time, moved from being single-screen things to being more installation-based projects and travelling shows. I think in those days, mid-1990s, Film and Video Umbrella were still covering Scotland and doing shows in Scotland. At some point that changed and the differentiation between the Scottish funding and English funding was made distinct and they weren't as involved any more up here, although they were working with people like Alan Currall and Roddy Buchanan and myself and Eddie. Things have subsequently changed again and fortunately they continue to work with Scottish spaces and artists, most recently Rachel Maclean.

MJ: Was there anything here supplying that gap?

SS: I guess that's why we were applying to things from the Scottish Arts Council as a way of keeping going. Eddie was doing a bit of teaching but it was very casual without a proper contract. We felt supported by the Scottish Arts Council to be able to keep going, keep making work, and ultimately have a studio space. We were also lucky to sell work occasionally. We are in public UK collections—in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, the Tate and Arts Council England—and various international collections, both public and private. At some point, a bit later on, when we had teaching experience and had made more work, say early-mid-2000s, we were employed as researchers in the [Glasgow] School of Art for a while. That didn't last; it was maybe unsustainable how that was funded? It was at a particular point in time, where lots of art schools were employing artists as academic researchers for REFs *etcetera*.

MJ: How did you sustain yourselves otherwise—even in a practical, living sense—were you working elsewhere?

SS: A bit of teaching, grants, signing-on. In fact, I remember when I first came to Glasgow, Patricia Fleming had set up Fuse, where you could sign-on as a member of Fuse, which acknowledged that you were an artist and making work. Patricia did a big group show with all the artists involved in that in McLellan Galleries [1996]. So, it was signing-on in the early days, claiming dole money. Fuse filled a gap for people; rather than you being hounded—'what jobs are you applying for?'—you could actually say, well, 'I'm practising as an artist and I'm doing this' and be able to: state benefits!

MJ: Would you regard that as a sweet spot or was it still rough?

SS: I guess we were lucky to be able to manage enough to survive and make work. Fuse was a really special thing that was set up, quite a lot of people participated. Have people mentioned that?

MJ: Lucy [McKenzie] has mentioned it but I didn't quite connect the two. She told me about this scheme and I'd heard about Fuse and Fly as well. Were the studios at Bridgeton, is that right?

SS: Yeah, I think so. [...] I didn't have a space there but I think so. I think you had to get Patricia to sign some paperwork. I can't remember the mechanics of it, but we maybe went to Bridgeton studios to get signed.

MJ: Was that quite a common practice? Were lots of people doing that?

SS: I think it was quite particular in that Patricia Fleming saw the reality was that people were living on the dole and she wanted to make some kind of formal thing around that being a real life for artists, or it was then.

MJ: Amazing to hear that now. If we could jump back to Tramway [1995]. Could you just tell me about that show?

SS: Yeah. It was in a side room off the main Tramway and in one room, which I think was known as the Sound Lobby then, where Willie Doherty had shown an amazing piece in *Trust* [1995], we installed *Intercourse*, which is the first piece that we made, the spitting piece, a double-projection installation with amplified sound. In a room which I think was known as the Project Room, a much taller space—these spaces have been knocked through now and don't exist anymore. We showed *Sustain* [1995] which was again a double-projection piece, each image positioned one above the other. The bottom image—made at the same time as *Mouth to Mouth* [1995]—was in colour and of Eddie, lying in the bath breathing out, and me, giving him air underwater. Above that was an image of a cropped torso, I was coming in to this image from the top and covering the torso with love bites. Because of the nature of the space we wanted to play with the architecture, intentionally coming into and out of the frame like appearing and disappearing into the space itself.

Going back to when we were first asked to work on a show together, maybe what I should have said was that we didn't necessarily know that we were going to start working with video. Around that time, we went to Documenta 9 and saw for the first time [Bruce] Nauman using video projection with Sharp projectors—big clunky things—which we were lucky enough to be able to get our hands on at the Rijksakademie and utilise this new equipment. People hadn't really worked with such 'portable' colour video projection in the gallery so much at that point. We made rules for ourselves based on what we really hated about video—what we definitely didn't want to do! We really both didn't like that feeling of going in an installation and not knowing whether there was more time to go in terms of duration, and feeling a bit stuck and captive. We didn't want to play with conventional narrative in that way, instead we were interested in the possibilities of the loop and repetition and such devices in the performance-to-camera things we were doing. The agency was with the viewer—to come in and out when they wanted to—and not to feel like they had to see something unfold in a narrative sense. I guess we were trying to set up both physical and psychological experiences.

MJ: Much more sculptural. To my mind that's kind of the hallmark of your work. Have there been divergences?

SS: Yes, but we've always talked about what we do as sculpture and have often said we didn't like being described as 'video artists'! We always felt that the work was much more about communication, sculpture, performance and we were mediating a lot of the early performance-to-camera work using a video camera and particularly what that allowed us. We're interested in what you can do with the medium of video, the intimacy and immediacy of it. Regarding framing, for example as being as much about what you cannot see, as what

you can see, through how we choose to frame and crop things. Video is really exciting to us as a medium but we weren't interested in it in a cinematic way—it was much more sculptural—in direct relation to the body and particularly the decisions made in relation to the space where it's shown.

MJ: Would you show in a screening context, or have you?

SS: Yeah, we often made dual versions of things. I'd still say that's one of the great things about video, you can make lots of versions of work. Some works had specific installation instructions. For example, *Mouth to Mouth* [1995]: the installation version is shown on black and white CCTV monitor with sound. The endlessly looped footage shows Eddie clothed in the bath and me breathing into his mouth—which has become probably become our most shown and well-known work. In fact, we first made that for outside somebody's bathroom in an exhibition they organised in their house, for artists Annette Heyer and Jim Hamlyn. We set things up so that the viewer might think that it could be a live feed. We have always been interested in the relationship between live and recorded. But then we also made a short screening version of it where the sound came on with the credits, before the image appeared and continued once it had faded out. Quite a few of the early works had dual formats: when they were installations we were really specific about how they had to be sculpturally installed in relation to the fabric of the architecture; and then there were sometimes also single-screen versions that could be more easily distributed—like through Film and Video Umbrella say, or indeed artists and freelance curators organising screenings themselves; Beagles and Ramsay did quite a few curated tapes that we sometimes put work in.

MJ: So, the home for this work was multiple. Did you have any interaction with LUX?

SS: We did a show with Gregor Muir who worked for LUX for a bit—in the old Lux Centre in Hoxton Square, London. Tracy Emin had a video in the same exhibition [*Pandemonium*, LEA Gallery, London, 1998] and we showed one or two installations. I think there was possibly a bit of rivalry between LUX and Film and Video Umbrella? We never worked as closely with LUX, which was a shame.

MJ: I'd always suspected that.

SS: I don't know the history but that's what I sensed. If you were already in one camp, they didn't appear to cross over. It was great though, having the opportunity of working with Gregor at The Lux Centre. However, in terms of screening programmes, their collection and stuff, we didn't—I think maybe there was correspondence but unfortunately it didn't ever come to anything with LUX in London, for whatever reasons.

MJ: So, there's no distribution element there. In terms of your distribution more generally, do you manage that yourselves?

SS: Yeah, Film and Video Umbrella were key, as mentioned. We've also worked with various commercial galleries over the years. We showed with Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London. We worked with a gallery in New York, Klemens Gasser & Tanja Grunert, and with a gallery in Switzerland for a bit [Galerie Bob van Orsouw]. They weren't really involved with distribution as such but more about getting work in museum shows and selling work too. Through d'Offay's we sold work to the Kramlich Collection, which then got in a show called *Seeing Time* at San Francisco MoMA [1999–2000]. I remember when we went to the Kramlich's house and saw all their video collection installed in their home. At the time, they

mentioned that they were getting Herzog and de Meuron ‘to build us a house for our collection’ and that has come to pass, many years later. So, there were pretty amazing experiences and opportunities like that early on—not so much about screening distribution, more to do with galleries getting our work seen in museum shows, including major video survey shows and books.

MJ: I guess the material life of those works: you’d have works and edition them?

SS: Yes. Installations are editions of three plus Artist Proof, which are not for sale—and single-screen works are editions of ten.

MJ: Ok, let’s maybe jump back again and do a bit of an exhibitions history. So, after Tramway, what went on then, if Scotland is the frame that we’re looking through?

SS: The Project Room and Sound Lobby, Tramway, Glasgow was 1995. Then we had a solo exhibition at the Fruitmarket Gallery which was called *Hooded.Bared* [1998]. In between that time, in terms of group shows, there was the show in Linlithgow—outside a bathroom—which became a key moment in 1995.

MJ: I’m interested in that house exhibition. Was there quite a lot of more DIY activity that you were involved in?

SS: Lots of people were doing it. Dave Shrigley and Jonathan Monk were literally doing exhibitions in their toilet! Cathy Wilkes was putting on exhibitions in her flat. There was a lot of that going on, which was all self-organised, self-initiated.

MJ: What was coming in and going out in terms of influence and affect? I look at your work and maybe think about Marina [Abramovic] and Ulay. What references were you aware of?

SS: I don’t know if we really knew their work at that time but through being in the Lyon Biennale in 1995, we got a chance to meet them. Later, when Sam Ainsley organised a show of their work at Tramway, Ulay came over and we got a chance to interview him, so he came to our flat in Dennistoun at the time and we interviewed him in our studio space there. Astonishing really. We were in a few of the ‘Glasgow shows,’ we were in a show called *Glasgow-Kunsthalle Bern* [1997] that Ulrich Loock curated and he did all the interviews for that catalogue in somebody’s flat in Garnethill around the kitchen table. In one way they were really quite important shows and venues to be a part of and get the work out there, but often it felt pretty ordinary; the possibility of having really interesting good discussions but often in people’s bedrooms and kitchens!

Lots of people were visiting Glasgow and organising shows. Also, we were also working with London-based curators like Iwona Blazwick as well. In terms of thinking about important people we’ve worked with on exhibitions, Ulrich Loock and Iwona Blazwick were fantastic to work with because they weren’t at all prescriptive, they just totally trusted you, foolishly or not! There was no pestering you for, ‘what exactly are you doing?’ when maybe—I don’t know, we don’t work with commercial galleries at the moment but maybe there’s a bit of pressure to be doing certain things. In particular, with Ulrich and Iwona, there was a real relationship of trust. They were genuinely willing to take risks and chances and made you feel free enough to make whatever work you wanted to make.

Equally with Francis McKee as well, when we worked with him later on the first GI in 2005, in an empty, abandoned factory space on Osborne Street. He let us do whatever we needed to and that in fact turned out to be the first show where we didn't use any recorded media at all, instead using mechanised objects and sculptures making sound. We have kind of stepped out of the work over time. I guess the writing of Samuel Beckett and the work of Bruce Nauman have always been key references along the way.

MJ: Has that been the arc of your practice?

SS: I gave a talk ['Being There'] to Sculpture Environmental Art students at the art school about a year ago, thinking about the position of the viewer in our work. We have always been interested in implicating the audience somehow, I guess at first in the early work we were a bit like a closed circuit and the viewer was on the outside, more like a voyeur, and then with *Breathing Space* [1997]—the piece with the plastic bags over our heads that was shown more recently in *GENERATION* [2014] we were interested in the fact that the other person was in the position of the camera; we each filmed each other trying to go through this physical and psychological situation. By putting them together in the space and hearing the dynamic and the rhythms of breathing in that intense situation, you can't help but breathe along with it and become part of it, 'The Third one as Medium' to quote the title of an Ulrich Loock essay on our work.

Then we went even further with the possibilities of cameras, of actually putting cameras in the body, or microphones in the body; playing around with dislocation of sound and image, but also—at the time Mona Hatoum was putting medical cameras inside and through the body—we were putting little, tiny CCTV cameras in the body not to look inside but to look out. Often in/from the oral cavity, so the relationship between the mouth and the eye became important. That wasn't just in terms of a visual thing, we were always thinking through how to install it. Some of the mouth pieces were shown on a black and white monitor, in a self-enclosed space, so when the mouth closed the whole room became dark, like the inside of a head. You had to wait for either a word or a breath to be able to see to get out of the room. We were playing around, more and more, with implicating the viewer. More recently we ourselves have stepped out of the work but we're still interested in the power dynamic of giving participants instructions to then see if they'll go for it or not.

For example, we made a piece where we specifically wanted to work with actors, because as part of their 'job' they may be required to do certain things. What we didn't know at that time is that there's a whole etiquette for what you can ask people to do in auditions—so we asked pairs of actors to kiss for a minimum of five seconds in front of the camera. We did a call out and there was a gender and age mix in the resulting group and we ended up making this piece called *What have we done?* [2011] where a group of six people continually pass a kiss on, in a circle, one to the other. You're given no contextualising information: who are these people? Why are they doing this?

I guess what I'm describing is how we've stepped out of the work but even prior to those instructional performances, we were working less with video and more with sculpture. Still central was our intent to choreograph the viewer's movement around a space with the work. We made a sculptural installation piece at Inverleith House, Edinburgh, called *Enter Love and Enter Death* [2007] which was comprised of carefully positioned head-height beams, dissecting both the space and bodies within it. Again, the viewers became participants in that, in just how they had to physically move around.

MJ: Was there a break in your practice or has it been more or less continuous?

SS: It's been continuous. The piece where we began to move away from video was the 2005 GI, in the factory space, and then shortly after [...] 2007/2008 was the show at Inverleith House with the sculptural divisions and then we presented *What have we done?* [2011] at the Changing Room, Stirling. Work since then is really diverse, from trying to do ambitious projects to move buildings to using different archives and collections and disrupting them somehow. Actually, we have been revisiting video more recently—specifically performance-to-camera again—so it has sort of come full-circle.

MJ: I wanted to ask about revisiting because you mentioned the show at *GENERATION*. So, re-exhibiting that, was that a process of re-thinking what it was?

SS: It was a bit of déjà vu, revisiting that, because we'd shown in *Correspondences*, a Scotland-Berlin show that was organised by Keith Hartley and a curator in Berlin, Ursula Prinz, and showed *Breathing Space* [1997] in the [Scottish National] Gallery of Modern Art and we were given the same room to show it in again for *GENERATION*. The museum staff took care of archiving the install for *GENERATION* so—although we're quite precise with installation instructions and have written things to send with work—they were really detailed about measurements and kinds of projectors and distances between *etcetera*, in relation to that space and made an archive of exactly how it was shown because it is in their collection [...] they archived the specifics of the install and mapped all that out. It was unusual to view the work in the exact same space again but obviously the context of that show was an overview of work in Scotland from the last twenty-five years and it was good to get chance to be with it again and show it to a new audience.

MJ: How do you feel about your framing within these historicisations or narratives? Sarah Smith had mentioned to me that there's a Taschen video art book that you're in and it's just you two and Douglas Gordon, that's Scotland represented via just that. I wonder if you've got any feelings on how you've been written up?

SS: I guess early on in our career, we were in major video survey shows like the Kramlich collection show *Seeing Time* in San Francisco. We also met important curators; Barbara London who was the video curator at MoMA and I've mentioned Christine van Assche at the Pompidou. Michael Rush who saw our work in San Francisco and New York included our work in a couple of key video books. Our video installation work was included in the Lyon Biennale and other significant international video shows, so it was picked up on and mirrored in publications on video. I think the Taschen book came out of a Kunst-Werke/PS1 exhibition we were in, organised by Klaus Biesenbach. So, it's great that what we were doing was picked up on and included in the history. However, I guess, in certain phases, it has felt like we've shown a lot in Scotland and maybe for whatever reasons those shows were quite short and that's a history that hasn't really been written up, one which is just as important to us in terms of capturing key changes in the work.

MJ: Is there a sense there about the limitations of Scotland, if these are happening via international connections, how have you found Scotland as a context, perhaps more in the negative?

SS: No, not at all. We have been able to survive, make our work, teach, meet people and travel whilst being based here. Two of our key shows have been in Scotland: in Inverleith

House where we showed our installation in probably the most beautiful exhibition space in Scotland, which sadly now is no more and in the first Glasgow International in 2005.

MJ: And the same with *The Changing Room*.

SS: Yeah, we were involved in the protest to try and save Inverleith House—such a key space in Edinburgh, who were showing people that you couldn't necessarily see in other spaces. Some of those spaces are no more but were really important.

MJ: For sure. When this critical infrastructure is maybe lacking, in terms of magazines and things, those institutions, their preservation and memory is really important. [...] I feel like if we were developing a timeline we maybe got to the end of the 1990s there, and then a couple shows in-between. Do you remember any significant organisations or commissioners? What kind of structures were there for you?

SS: In the late 1990s, we were working widely and had solo shows in Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London; Kunstmuseum Luzern, Switzerland; and Portikus, Frankfurt as well as participating in international group shows. From 2002 to 2004, we were commissioned to make a three-part project, *A Black Thread*, with Film and Video Umbrella, which was shown at Chisenhale Gallery, London, in Sheffield and Milton Keynes Gallery. They were three entirely different shows with an accompanying publication. Peppered within this period, we did residencies as well, before having children in the later 2000s. We went to Tokyo for three months in 2000, which was through a Tate Gallery award; we did the Henry Moore Sculpture Fellowship at the British School at Rome in 2002. So, we were moving around but with Glasgow being the base.

MJ: It does seem like these things were happening despite your location. Not because of Glasgow. That's interesting.

SS: Yeah, just applying for things. Being selected for things and equally not getting them, there was a lot of rejection too!

MJ: If we could maybe jump to production. Were you just making all your work in the studio at home?

SS: We eventually got a studio at WASPS on the back of getting an arts council grant. It has kind of come full-circle—it would be handy to have a studio back in the domestic space now, in order to deal with the pragmatics of both of us being able to get a studio at the same time; which is difficult when you're independently teaching and have a family in the mix! At first, we had a studio and our own U-Matic edit suite in the house, then a small studio at WASPS in Dennistoun, where we were living at the time, and then later on we got another artists' bursary from the arts council in 2015—maybe one of their last individual bursaries that you could apply for. From that, we got an additional studio space, specifically as a project room where we could set things up and test them out. The smaller studio is a production space and the other concrete, black-out cube is where we're set things up to try out. Often things are also tried out during install—once we even had a couple of videotapes in our pockets, not quite sure which was going to be in the exhibition!

MJ: Maybe reflecting on the start and end and changes in between, have you noticed changes in the availability of funding, the ease of attaining resource, as a bit of a compare-and-contrast is there anything you'd have to say about that?

SS: Yeah, I haven't looked recently so I don't know how the structure of Creative Scotland funding works currently for artists. Way back, there were many possible funding opportunities, from Patricia Fleming's Fuse where signing-on was a way of funding yourself, just day-to-day, to then possibilities for applying for things such as grants, residencies and awards, and occasionally selling work. Whereas now, maybe because I'm teaching in 4th year, I notice that there's lots of opportunities for recent graduates—there are lots of things you can apply for in Scotland upon graduating, some of which are residencies, some of which are grants, bursaries, prizes, *etcetera*.

MJ: It's interesting thinking about those economies and selling work quite early on. I guess that would be counter to my idea of how the market for film and video has gone.

SS: I think we kind of did it back to front in some ways! We just went with it. I remember not knowing how to write a contract to sell something, or the mechanics of editioning and having to ask different people to then build up a way of knowing how to do that. It was all a bit learn-as-you-go.

MJ: Where were you cobbling together this knowledge from?

SS: I guess painter friends were selling work through galleries, so they knew more about contracts. Also, through meeting people during installs of shows, from institutions and from the tech side—for example, Pip Lawrenson from Tate, who worked particularly with artists working with film and video and who was very involved in installation and preservation of AV work. We got advice about putting together installation instructions how things were editioned and archived *etcetera*. Then, when we started to work with commercial galleries who obviously had more focused experience of that than we did. It was totally learning as you went and not necessarily always knowing all that stuff.

MJ: I guess the generalised knowledge about these things is still quite oblique.

SS: I think so. I feel I still don't really know much about pricing.

MJ: Maybe if I could switch to your opinions on things, more outward looking, are there any specific events or activities or points that you recall that seem to be really significant in the history of moving image in Scotland?

SS: One thing that springs to mind was when Dan Graham came and gave a talk at CCA [1996] and showed *Rock My Religion* [1984] with a small intimate audience. He's a key figure working with video and installation since the 1970s, playing with feedback and delay and so on, but he's also really into music and its relation to Shamanism *etcetera*. That was an amazing event. However, my 'highlights' aren't only in relation to moving image but are broader than that. Importantly, lots of the shows at Inverleith House organised by Paul Nesbitt and Graham Domke were incredible. Certainly, in terms of getting a chance to see art in Scotland that was really significant.

Not to mythologise it—but there was also the context of a community and different networks of people being generous to each other and making things happen. There were a lot of self-initiated projects and motivation to get stuff out there and think about the context and the negotiation of what you've got to do to get work in different spaces, other than the museum and gallery - to do it yourself, here, and beyond. I particularly remember people doing performance work, one-off things that have really stayed with me. Some things at

Transmission. Mostly one-off events, those experiences where if you were there you won't forget. Thinking back, other key moments include some of the SoFA Friday Events in the art school, with guests coming to talk at the GFT. Some of the programme of Friday Events when Pavel Büchler was running them when he was Head of Fine Art at GSA were amazing and included really interesting speakers; artists, curators, thinkers. On a personal level, the opportunity to interview Ulay in our flat, to coincide with the Abramovic and Ulay exhibition at Tramway, was incredibly special and unforgettable. And having Cheryl Donegan and Kenneth Goldsmith round for tea with their then young son when they were in Glasgow.

MJ: Part of what I'm trying to do is write an exhibitions history for this stuff and the sense of landmark shows is quite thin.

SS: There was a big show at Tramway that Douglas [Gordon] and Katrina [Brown] were involved in, with Charles Esche.

MJ: Was it called *Trust* [1995]?

SS: Yes! It was a really dynamic show and I remember seeing works by Tony Oursler, Stan Douglas, Abramovic and Ulay, Cheryl Donegan. One piece I was particularly struck by was by Willie Doherty. It was so simple and pared back, so physical in how you responded to it but also really politically loaded. I can't remember the title of it but it was shown in its own room, a floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall projection. The image was some grassy waste-ground, filmed with a hand-held video camera at night, lit either with a torch or just the light from the camera. Because the camera was hand-held whilst walking, the footage actually threw you around and made you feel physically sick watching it. This was also compounded by anticipation and dread, because it was based in the context of Northern Ireland and The Troubles—it was like, something's going to happen here and somebody's being taken somewhere for something to happen. But you were just stuck in that bit in-between. My description doesn't do it justice, it was really incredibly powerful.

MJ: That sense of threat or anxiety seems to come through in your own work as well so maybe there's something in there.

SS: Yes, a real connection. [...] Other significant shows I remember experiencing there include Pierre Huyghe, Phillipe Parreno, Abramovic and Ulay, Martin Boyce.

MJ: Bringing things back to Scotland, I wonder if you've noticed anything that differentiates production or circulation of video and film work here that's different to the rest of the UK or the rest of the world? Even from your memories of working in Amsterdam or England.

SS: Thinking about distribution in Amsterdam, there was an artists' TV channel which you could send your work to and get it screened. But I don't feel like I have the experience of working, other than self-organised distribution or with UK bodies, from a solely Scottish perspective. We didn't work with any bodies or institutions who were doing that here. We either did that ourselves or, if and when we working with galleries, in collaboration with them. Key relationships here though include Francis McKee, who has both written about our work and commissioned it. In terms of distribution though, I don't really have that perspective because our distributed things were through Film and Video Umbrella in the main.

MJ: Relatedly, though maybe moving from ‘container’ to ‘content’, do you think there’s anything Scottish about what people make here? Is the work people make here different to the work people make elsewhere?

SS: Hmm, I don’t know. I think people are serious, focused, rigorous, ambitious perhaps, and there’s certainly something about intent—because a lot is self-organised or has to be. It’s hard to generalise! Something more important is people making the commitment to stay here and how it is a creative community and a creative centre. People generally choose to stay for quite a long time. I guess ultimately there were the support systems, I don’t know if there still are as many? Not necessarily focusing on moving image, but just the fact of being able to be an artist here and feel that you can go anywhere and everywhere, there’s certainly a bit of that state of mind.

MJ: This might preclude the next question I’m going to ask which is a bit of an invitation of critique about what I’m doing but do you think there’s a value to discussing moving image art through a national framework, is that useful?

SS: Yeah, I think so. It’s interesting to fill in the gaps. Like you’re saying, archives maybe only go so far and then the trails of stuff peter out. There’s something about that thing of people needing to write about it, how do you get it seen by enough people. What I would consider some of our really key works, sometimes weren’t on for very long, so in a purely selfish way, it’s a pity that maybe not that many people saw them. You were mentioning the other day about the show that the [Scottish National] Gallery of Modern Art did in Edinburgh, *Running Time*, which again was crazy because it was ever-changing. Things were on for a week, and there was only a certain way to experience the work, through lots of monitors.

MJ: Maybe there’s something technological in there that’s frustrating. Or if moving image is a greedy medium and it needs your time, but it also only exists whilst it’s being watched, materially—you know if you make these landmark sculptures, they’re going to exist no matter where they are, but moving image has to be staged to be alive.

SS: But that’s what I like about it and that’s what brings it closer to performance or to how you effect the viewer and make it an experience. I remember, even as a student, working with video and everything being on tapes, and until the tape was in something and playing the work sort of disappeared. Now obviously, stuff’s coming at us from everywhere. Just in the span of our working with video, everything’s changed.

MJ: I wonder, and maybe this is an off-the-record question, depending, but do you think the position of GSA as a *public* education institution for an artistic community has changed?

SS: I guess everything has changed across higher education. Being a student, you’ve got to borrow money, you’ve got to work. I think the danger is that, as a student, you could perceive yourself as a client or a customer, things potentially become commodified. There are pressures on education, much wider than GSA. As a member of UCU, I’m just about to maybe take national industrial action about key issues of casualisation, gender and BAME pay gaps, increasing workload *etcetera*. Those really important things like going to a talk that changes your life, having opportunities to physically test out work for yourself and equally, in front of an audience, maybe they happen less because resources and staff are spread thinner? I don’t think that’s just to do with here but it is a concern.

MJ: I think I'll start to round up a bit. I've got two optimistic questions which should flip that. One is, what do you think—if there is an artists' moving image ecology, or support structure for people working in this way—what do you think it needs to do to be more sustainable, what would your hope be?

SS: Going back to the experience thing, of something not existing until it's there being presented, is there a means through which you can access work more easily? For example, Ubu[Web] is a 'live' online resource where you can view works that maybe you'd only previously have seen as an image in a catalogue or magazine, or a still online. There are difficulties with the whole Ubu thing, about just being able to access people's work in that way, without conventional permissions—it's complicated I suppose but a crucial repository nonetheless.

There are different ways to have an online presence, we've got a website but we don't put entire videos on it, partly because often there are instructions for how they're supposed to be seen and if they're not seen like that then I would say that's not the work. Instead installation shots act as documentation. We also have a presence on Instagram but these possibilities are just vehicles for finding the work, not actually experiencing it as it was made and intended to be shown. There's also the Electronic Arts Intermix, New York, model: they have a collection of seminal video works, which you can book out to view and research in a viewing room situation. I'd love to get chance to spend time doing that sometime.

MJ: It's the double bind of access, that it also cheapens—you know that Hito Steyerl essay, 'In Defence of the Poor Image,' I always come back to that in terms of thinking about whether it's better to see the work or to see the work properly.

SS: Ideally, you want the viewer to experience the work as intended. However, when you think of some of the key works of Abramovic and Ulay, for example, they weren't made to be shown as videos at all. They were just made for them, to see how the performance went, because they didn't know what was going to happen and yet now, that's how we now experience the work. There are loads of strands in this aren't there? There's time, technology, ways of accessing things that are all changing all the time.

MJ: Would you say that's also a critique of things happening in the real world in terms of access, whether that's like screening programmes or exhibitionary work, do you think there's a lack there? A bit of a leading question. I guess I have felt subjectively that I haven't been able to build an education about the historic avant-garde, video, because nobody shows it, whereas in other cities there are dedicated cinemas for this sort of thing.

SS: I don't believe that the cinema is necessarily the right place either. In 1995 when we were in the Lyon biennale, the curators were explicitly relating video work to cinema and we were saying, 'no, our work's not about cinema, we're more interested in performance and sculpture.' I'd still say that the space and context are key. Because even the term 'moving image' is a spectrum, it's so diverse and things can move in and out of that. As I mentioned right at the beginning, about our not being interested in narrative, and maybe not so interested in the purely cinematic space, but about the experiential space, which might move from a cinema, to a lecture theatre, to a gallery space, to someone's house. It's having that access, of the experience of actually seeing work which is maybe hard to do. I'm more interested in seeing art, no matter what form rather than feeling that moving image has to be 'separated,'

though, of course, at the same time I realise the importance that the history of moving image needs to be recorded and made evident. [...]

K. Gillian Steel

Marcus Jack: To start, maybe you could tell me about how you got into working with film or moving image, starting with education?

Gillian Steel: So, I went to the Glasgow School of Art. From school, from very early on, I'd been involved with printmaking. I was quite interested in that process of duplication, from the start, but I opted to go into printed textiles, not really understanding what that was about and it had become quite a fashion-oriented department and I absolutely hated it. I spent a lot of time in the Environmental Art department to the point where David Harding, at the end of the year when it came to assessments, said, 'oh, where's that girl Gillian?' Because that was his first year in the department. My interests at that point were already going outwith the area that I was training in. Anyway, finished that and everybody in my department obviously went off to London to work in textile studios, I had absolutely no interest in that and was just completely at a loss in terms of what I was doing. I then met Malcolm [Dickson] one day in Kelvingrove Park and he said, 'come and get involved in Transmission.'

So, I got involved in the committee at Transmission Gallery and through that started documenting some of the live performances and other things going on at that time, not having a clue what I was doing really, just pointing a camera and pressing the button. It was really awful, and overshot and all the rest of it, and hose-piping, but then from there I became quite fascinating in the process, the physical thing around filmmaking, film itself, video was just beginning to develop as a medium but it was really clunky and had its own aesthetic. I was interested in both as a kind mechanical process, so I started looking at animation which is just breaking down the filmmaking process into the twenty-four or twenty-five frames per second, and thought, 'that can't be right, that you would draw twenty-five pictures to make a second of animation, that's insane, who would do that?' But, of course, that was what it was and after a year or so of Transmission I then applied for Duncan of Jordanstone and I went to do Electronic Imaging at Duncan of Jordanstone which took me into a whole different area of practice and I was obviously much happier there.

When I came out of Duncan of Jordanstone—the thing about Duncan of Jordanstone was that it was very video-focused and by that point I had really been fooling around with Super 8, hand-processing, all this weird, super obsolete stuff, and then to come into Duncan of Jordanstone where we were carrying around, oh my God, lugging around this massive equipment—I couldn't do anything on my own, which I had been able to do as a filmmaker with a little, dinky Super 8 camera and then I could clunk together some kind of soundtrack. It became quite a different process and there were different people involved in that group that year, people like Falko Boermans who went onto editing with the BBC, who was very into the whole technical television programming aspect of it and then you'd have Peter McCaughey at the other end who's very interested in it as an artistic practice, and Katrina McPherson was interested in it as a way of documenting another creative practice of dance.

All those things were really fantastic at that time, I think that blew my mind in a really positive way. In a way, my four years at The Glasgow School of Art had been a little bit deadening. It's an education process in that it deprives you of what you really want to learn so you're desperate, by the time you get out, to learn. So, I came out of that and there were quite different modes of working that had been demonstrated to me, this kind of industry-based way of working, where you work with a team of people—of course that's all changed now as well—and that sort of artistic practice. I think I fell somewhere between the two at that point.

When I came out I got a grant from the Scottish Film Council to make an experimental narrative film that had a beginning, middle and end, and I got the New Media Award from the Scottish Arts Council at the time, so two very different ways of practising. I got funding for both ways of working. It really did allow me to experiment a lot, moving much more into video but still drawing on that fascination with the mechanical, physicality, the chemical process of filmmaking.

When I graduated, I think one of the first thing that happened was being invited as a cohort, with Douglas Gordon and a few other folk to do *Sites/Positions* [1990]. My part of that work was about working in collaboration with a community group, because I guess I had always had a little bit of a jar in terms of what artistic practice was in that thing of the artist being the whole centre of the universe and I wanted it to be a much more disparate and collaborative, co-authored thing. So, for that I did an animation project with a group from Sighthill and that was just mental because they were just an absolutely mental group. I was quite soft-spoken, at one point they'd basically destroyed Springburn museum at the end of one of the sessions. It was just a case of working with them and having these conversations. It was obviously a very slow process because you were asking people to engage in the process of making something that they couldn't see. I mean, imagine trying to do that with a group of young people now, no way. So, I had to suspend their disbelief that inside this little box we were creating this thing. I really didn't have any examples to show them of things I'd done or anything, I was completely bluffing it. We made a little short film and that really was an amazing process, that whole thing of when the group saw the moving image and it's so magical, it's like fireworks. Then I guess from there I did move more into that socially engaged practice area. I'm trying to think of where I went from there. I guess just developing more of these projects.

I got the post of Coordinator of Castlemilk Video Workshop, it had been run previously by Paul Cameron, who was very much involved. People would come in, people like Roddy Buchanan, and Paul would just sit down and edit their work for them. I was like, 'no, I'm not doing that, I'm not doing your work for you, this is about a different sort of thing, it's about developing ideas for film through the support of this organisation.' So, we did a number of projects: Milk Teeth Movies, a funding scheme for people making films the first time. Then from there, alongside that, was developing a personal practice that was much more installation-based, again still drawing on both video and film, those kinds of new and old technologies.

MJ: I've got a few questions. I wonder if we could maybe pin some dates on some of these things. When was it that you would have left your undergrad?

GS: 1991, I think. I did an undergrad and then I went back again and upgraded it to master's. That was just an excuse to have another year away from the pressures of having to make a living. That was 1991, and then when I went back and did it to the master's level in 2008.

MJ: The Electronic Imaging course, was that a second undergraduate degree?

GS: It was a postgraduate diploma and then I upgraded to master's.

MJ: One of the narratives that has come up through my research is the Dundee / Television Workshop / Electronic Imaging community as something that's maybe quite distinct from Glasgow and the Glasgow Miracle narrative. Could you reflect on any difference between those experiences?

GS: Yeah, completely. Because I think the Dundee scene was really led by Steve Partridge and from my experience he was really—I mean I just thought he was a Rottweiler. He was very industry-focused but also within the art scene alongside tutors like Lei Cox who was a practising artist. Steve had his own company, but he was very much of that mindset and somebody like me coming in, he just made this joke like, ‘yeah, you’re a filmmaker, filmmakers don’t say rollover, you say “go and stop.”’ So, there was a real attitude of people from Glasgow being a bit more film oriented, a bit more into this kind of underground, Transmission-type, on the periphery of the art scene, doing kind of radical stuff. Using that word radical makes me think of Doug Aubrey, him and Alan Robertson, they had come from Glasgow as well to do the course in Dundee.

There was really a very strong, experimental video scene going on there and I think that for the scene in Dundee, Steve was looking for something that had a much more professionalised gloss to it. There was a sense that I got that they really were looking to make some kind of historical thing, whereas in Glasgow I think we were a bit more ramshackled. Malcolm [Dickson] was definitely doing all those things, trying to document and through New Visions and all these organisations, they were trying to collate works and create that history but I think Steve had a much more—I don’t know—it was much more industry-focused, whether industry of art or industry of television, television-making, that’s where his head was much more at, and that’s where his contacts were.

MJ: That’s a good lead on to something I was wondering about. Resource, support, what organisations you found supporters in, where you were exhibiting or getting funding. Could you recall any of those things?

GS: At first, I was pretty much on my own. Yeah, through Transmission but then Glasgow Film and Video Workshop. And again, there were these disparate scenes going on and the people who were making films, aiming for that television thing, or people making short films because they wanted to make big feature films, and then you had artists mucking around with weird stuff. So that was a really good environment, that was a place where you went and there were other people hanging around. And yeah, I did get financial support through various funding schemes that had to do with GFVW. But, it wasn’t just that, it was very much a melting point at that time where you were connected to other filmmakers, you knew there were going to be people around who were focused on sound production, for example.

MJ: Did that seem quite separate from the Transmission cluster?

GS: Oh yeah, it was quite separate but increasingly there were connections and at that point Malcolm then became the new director at Street Level. I thought that was quite an odd move into stills photography but then film became much more integral to Street Level’s programme at that point. There was a little cluster of things going on, there was Street Level, there was GFVW, and then there’s Transmission. By that point, Transmission was kind of moving to a whole new crowd of folk, which was great—just to walk away from something and then see it emerge as something new. But, yeah, it was very much those three groups that were quite active in very different ways within the same filmmaking and moving image scene. I think some people would definitely say they ‘were more aligned with’ or ‘were more into that group.’ But there were different things happening, we had stuff happening at Street Level, regular film events and screenings at Street Level but then also at the GFVW there was Café Flicker which was really ramshackled and fun, you just didn’t know what the hell was going to come up.

MJ: Did you find that you were quite unique in being someone who was an interloper across these different contexts?

GS: Yeah. I felt very much like that. That I was sneaking between. I guess I felt that a bit right from the beginning, even within Transmission—I trained in design, like it was this really awful thing in my background. Now I just think that’s so ludicrous, and am quite happy to mix between the two. Definitely. There were some people moved between the different groups, again Paul Cameron and Kevin Cameron, they did all the going between different groups. So, while I’m saying that, there were a group of us who did and then there were the people who were definitely GFVW, they were aiming for making those short films as a calling card to make a feature. I think that explains why GFVW, when it became GMAC, it has become this animal that’s very much about small production companies and making films rather than people with creative practice who are mucking about with stuff, mucking about seriously and in a very focused way but not in the way that was about being a filmmaker. So, there’s definitely that thing that was always going on, that crossover of different kinds of interest and practices.

MJ: Would you be able to identify when that transition is happening at GFVW?

GS: I’d have to really think about it, that’s the kind of thing where if we were in a room together, with a lot of us, we would start to remember, but I think that when GFVW moved to those premises. So, you know it was in the East End? It was originally in the East End in this lovely little building, the Dolphin Arts Centre, and then they got these massive premises in King Street so there really was a buzz around that and a real sense of somewhere we could all hang around, with loads of different rooms, there were the little production companies and then the oddities like me, with bits of film and different medium. But I think the real change came when it became GMAC.

I’m trying to think who was doing coordination and who was on the board, so Aimara Reques, Pauline Law, were on the board, Paul [Cameron], there was point where it was run by Janice Campbell who only stayed a year. That was quite an unstable time, there seemed to be a bit of ‘what is this organisation about’ and a feeling for some people that this should be much more focused as a serious attempt at building a Scottish filmmaking scene. All this reflected that whole thing. At the same time—when the Scottish Arts Council became Creative Scotland—not a particularly positive time I’d say—the Scottish Film Council was absorbed into the new organisation and there were very clear divisions, a sense that they didn’t really want to be together. They were kind of forced into this place of being together and they couldn’t work it out. I don’t know if it ever really was worked out. I still feel within Creative Scotland there are very clear silos. Starting around about the same time, GMAC had come into existence and evolved as something else. Suddenly there was a sense that people like myself—I mean artists working with film in whatever ways rather than to more conventional filmmaking models—were not part of that scene. I guess I drifted off to other things in any case, so it wasn’t as if I felt excluded, it’s just that if I found an excuse to go back I just suddenly felt like it was an animal I didn’t recognise. It became very, much a cinematic industry type of venture. [...]

MJ: Could you tell me a bit more about your experience at Castlemilk Video Workshop? When that was, what that involved, your role there?

GS: Yeah. [...] I was coordinator at Castlemilk Video Workshop. The whole Castlemilk Arts Office was run by Graham McKenzie and he was another very driven individual who was

skilled at keying into funding streams and the right partnerships and building up the art scene within Castlemilk but also making sure that it had relevance across the whole sector. I think that was a really positive and interesting thing and it wasn't just a wee community project but there were really interesting artists being brought in to do stuff, doing real quality work and collaborating with different community groups to do that. That was really fantastic. So, the Video Workshop was one strand within the Castlemilk arts office. Paul [Cameron] had been running it and I think when I came in, he had just installed Avid. Horrific to my mind, that whole trying to get to grips with non-linear editing. It very much replicated—tried to replicate filmmaking—but completely lacked the tactile experience.

There was a lot of equipment there and there were local people coming in and using the equipment, maybe sometimes to build up skills to try and earn a living as well as following up creative projects. There was also a real influx of interesting artists and filmmakers because of the emphasis on not just doing a wee community project—something tucked in the corner in a ghetto somewhere, but that we're doing something of relevance. Roddy Buchanan, Elsie Mitchell, who went on to run the arts programme at An Lanntair. Ann Vance, she was another person who was involved up at the workshop. Despite the fact that it was incredibly difficult to get to and it was tucked away in this shopping centre, through a little side door, like Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ where you went up a stairwell and then there was this incredible space, where all the stuff was and where all these people were coming to do work.

It was quite extraordinary really, and the fact that local people put up with it, these idiot middle-class filmmaker, artist-types walking around. A huge generosity was extended on the part of that local community, but also on the part of the artists coming in and out. Mandy McIntosh, for example, did a great project on teenage fatherhood, which worked particularly well because of where it was anchored in that community. So, I think as an example of something that really connected and brought in, in a positive way, all these practising filmmakers and artists from other spaces and places and areas of interest, that was quite amazing.

In terms of other local organisations, there was also C Sharp recording studios, they were a bunch of guys who were very mainstream, they were there to record bands, to do this particular thing well but we would come in with a sound artist, creating a soundtrack using plastic bottles that were being hit with sticks to create all these funky sounds. It kind of offended their professional standards because they were very focused on production values and quality, which was helpful to us. I think we were also helpful to them if only in terms of bringing up the question of what a recording studio was, what it did or didn't do, how it should or shouldn't function.

Now that you say it, what was that like? It was actually a really fantastic melting pot, again, of different folk doing stuff. A lot of work. I think Paul Cameron recently was posting stuff that he'd found from the archive or work that had been made—I think him and Malcolm were actually talking about it recently—different work that had been made. We had a little gallery as well, I don't know if you know, there was the Fringe Gallery. So, the Fringe Gallery was this beautiful little, white, clean cube that we access to, to programme exhibitions and it was just amazing to have that. Again, people came from all over the place. If we were organising something, quite often if there was something happening—an exhibition or if there was something big, a festival or event like *Sites/Positions* going on—a bus would be organised to pick people up from the city centre to take people there and then to take them back. What an amazing energy around that whole scene, I can't really think of anything quite the same.

MJ: If you could call it a movement, and maybe it's not a movement, but what do you think happened to the workshop movement?

GS: There were a lot of things that happened round about the same time. So, at the end of the late 1990s and then early 2000s, there was the new Curriculum for Excellence and there was a lot of emphasis on bringing artists and filmmakers into schools to make the curriculum more creative, so the workshop scene exploded at that point and along with that, there came this desire from some quarters that it become much more professionalised and some people within the workshop sector really hated that. Doing training in disclosure for example, you know, learning how to deal with a situation where a young person discloses something psychologically or physically damaging that's happened to them, what are the procedures, *etcetera*, and some people felt that really encroached on their role as practitioners and that they weren't there to behave in the same ways or to function as teaching staff or social workers, but they were there to come in and essentially break it and do something different with the system.

There was a push to regulate because there were some artists who would turn up at workshops late, lacking the stuff that they needed to deliver the workshop, in an environment where teaching staff were constrained to running to a timetable in short time segments. [...] Some teaching staff were really riled by it, thinking 'oh my God, these people are idiots,' and maybe some of them were, particularly in terms of turning up late, not being properly prepared for what you wanted to do, not having a plan. I mean, that just looks really bad. I think that this started to really change the workshop scene, not always for the better though. I still come across artists who are a bit all over the place but I kind of like it in a way, that's what they're here to do, their skill lies somewhere else.

The whole thing of working in schools is incredibly uptight now, it's incredibly difficult to get into schools to do workshops as an individual artist because schools tend to buy in companies who have formulaic programmes like BFI's Film in Schools that they come and deliver, in a different way to the ways in which an individual artist-filmmaker might do. The risks in terms of upsetting the system and the staff are much lower. Somebody like Mandy McIntosh who would have come in and done some crazy macramé project as an integral part of a film project would just seem too difficult to realise now. So, yes, there was a definite point of departure from ways of working, to a system of working in schools, and I think it was then.

MJ: If we could maybe switch back to talking about your practice. So, after *Sites/Positions* what sort of work were you making and where was it showing?

GS: I guess after that, what else did I do? TSWA, which was Television South West Arts. I did another commission with a group in Govan, at the Pearce Institute—another fantastic space that was really busy, I don't know what it's like now—the way that I was then working: at first I was making these short films with groups and then I started to involve other ways in which I was working as a practitioner, using writing, drawing and then eventually connecting my film practice to my background in textiles. One of the first places I did that was in an exhibition at Street Level which was a solo show where I created this house out of fabric and inside the house was the projection work. There were large scale photographs too.

At that point I wasn't just working on short films because it got more and more difficult to get any kind of funding to make short films, in particular anything experimental. It had

become much more industrial. The funding streams were looking to support this kind of industrial model so it became really hard. I started working a lot more in stills photography at this point the other reason for that was that I'd had a baby and I couldn't get time to go to the toilet never mind for anything else! It made my head explode, that whole thing of not having a work space but continuing to make work without funding and without a space or forum to share or show work.

Sometimes I would get a residency. I got one through South Ayrshire council for example when my first baby was a few months old. That was an opportunity, within that residency was a very clear remit for me to do my own practice and within my own practice I would engage with groups. That's incredibly difficult to find now. All these residencies—there's a lot of pay for your own residency—where am I going to get the money to do that when I'm working all the time to make money to live on? There are very few residencies which have an emphasis on 'create your work, develop your practice, but engage with us, let us know or let the community know about it, through some kind of process—hands on workshops or a film screening.' I guess in response to that I became much more engaged in group work as a means to continue having a personal practice. For example, with that residency, I did a lot of hand-processed film and I made the film *Stepping into the Same River Twice*. There was a theme I had to work to, quite often people give you themes which is a real pain because it's maybe not where your personal practice is going but on that occasion I managed to make it work for me. Between the large-scale stills photography—developing them in garden troughs because they were really huge—hand-processing film and moving more towards video, because I didn't have a space to work in.

I was showing stuff in temporary spaces like in disused shops, there was a group show that we had— called *No Small Feat*, a group of artists and filmmakers who had recently had kids—it was about the no small feat of continuing to have a practice and caring for a new baby. This took place in a temporary space somewhere on King Street, and those temporary spaces were quite an important aspect of the scene. They're all but impossible to do now. They really are. We tried to do something for Glasgow International, a project called *Make Strange* where we were working with a group of asylum seekers, again we were doing hand-processed film and printing, and actually finding a temporary space in a shop—there were loads of empty shops—but actually finding space [was difficult].

I think the drop-in gallery spaces, temporary, artist-run, collective spaces had quite an impact on the ability of practitioners like myself to have an outlet for work. I made a new work, a few years ago I got funding and I went to Hospitalfield and I did a little bit of work there for a month and then finished the film about two years ago, I think it took me about five years to make this film, it's a five-minute film so that averages out at about a minute a year, but I've not shown it anywhere. The idea was to show it in July, in an exhibition, but now this has happened [COVID-19]. These films, where am I going to show them? Quite often, and I'm sure you've heard this a million times, they are archived in places or I've got them in places but they were maybe only shown once in that context but there's not been another context to show them in.

When you look at the development of early video work, for example in New York in the 1960s there was WNET / Channel 13 which had its Television Laboratory programme of artist's residencies giving folk like Joan Jonas and Nam June Paik opportunities to make experimental films which were broadcast to the general public. Here and now though, there's a real sense of 'oh no, people won't tolerate that, so we can't have it.' That really does have a huge impact on practitioners having an outlet. I still continue, quite insanely, to make little

films and have a practice. I guess I've found other ways. Obviously, you have online outlets now but it just never creates the same kind of dialogue as people all in a room.

MJ: I did want to ask about where your work has lived and whether there has been a push towards the art side, and whether that's a push towards the gallery and not the cinema. Is that something that you've felt or have you been able to cross both exhibition spaces?

GS: Yes, there has been more of a push for the work to 'live' in an art—gallery—context rather than in cinema settings. There seem to be more room in gallery settings for the screening of less than conventional films and of course for installation work that incorporates film or video. Obviously, the repertory cinemas like GFT are supportive and deliver programmes that showcase those outlier type of filmmakers, still between those slivers within cinema programming and the limited opportunities in galleries these are few and far between.

I've been really lucky. I have to admit that I don't really push myself as an artist to be shown, I wait to be invited. I've been involved in screenings, people have put the stuff on in festivals in Germany, Sweden and all sorts of places as well as, usually, the GFT in Glasgow, the Old Hairdressers. So, there are places where they've been shown in these cinematic/gallery settings but they are few and far between, they always have been but they're much more so now. I think the emphasis now is—well, I think the whole thing of being an artist, is it more professionalised now? You do have to be very single-minded to decide 'I'm going to work in this particular way.' It was interesting being in with a small cohort of people at the residency in Hospitalfield because I could see that in the mindset of a lot of other people there, that they worked in that particular way towards particular curators, people to target, take an interest and take them up. You almost need an agent, a curator who falls in love with you and decides to carry your work, and I guess I've not hugely done that because I'm a scatterbrain and I think too many things at once.

What I decided recently was to set up our own show, to start making the work towards a date and then stage it wherever we could find a space, even if that turned out to be my garage. However, in Paisley there's a space that has popped up, it's called the POP Space, it's the old Post Office and it's in the old Piazza Shopping Centre. Paisley's quite an interesting place because it's a bit more like what Glasgow was like in the late 1980s, 1990s. It's not been quite so commandeered yet but getting there, it's pretty rough around the edges, in terms of social deprivation and a real mix of interesting artists and different folk coming in to live there. In fact, It's a little bit like Castlemilk Video Workshop.

So, they've got the old Post Office in this 1970s-type shopping mall, I think Edinburgh Printmakers own it for some reason, they acquired all these empty units in the shopping centre. Recently, at the end of last year, I spoke to Ann Vance and a few other folk, Karen Vaughan, Jane McNally and I said, 'we need to show some work, this is ridiculous, we need to show some work.' So, we got together and decided we were going to have an exhibition and it would open in July and it would be of film-based, moving image based work, and around that to organise access session, film-processing sessions or seminars and screenings. That was really strongly supported by Kate Drummond (Renfrewshire Leisure) who's running that space, 'yeah, come in and use the space, have the exhibition for a month.' But once Paisley becomes much more corporate, once people become much more interested in it as a place, then that will be more and more difficult. It's just like Dennistoun. Dennistoun was this place where really interesting things were happening, a lot of artists living there as I did at one point, but as it becomes more gentrified then we get squished out, but we are

always a part of that process of gentrification—help it along and then get we squished out. That’s a thing.

MJ: It’s such a shame about that exhibition; is it just postponed?

GS: Well there’s talk of putting it online but I do feel again that you need to have—while I feel that it’s really fantastic that we’re finding ways of still connecting—I think it has to be a space that people can walk into and go, ‘woah’ [...] to physically connect with the work. I love the diversity of the audience there. You will get folk who are the worse for wear, they think it’s still the Post Office and they’ll come in holding a little envelope that’s got coins in it and ask you to help them post a letter to someone who’s in jail. What’s interesting about that is that they usually lift their heads at one point and say, ‘what is this?’ Anyway, it’s a fantastic space and I really like it, again it’s got that potential for diversity. We’re hoping that we can reschedule it for maybe early next year, that’ll be fantastic to see how, as old codgers, myself and Ann, Jane McNally, Karen Vaughan, have developed and continue to have a practice as filmmakers and artists.

MJ: There are two areas in this story that I’d like to look into a bit more, one is film culture and your navigation of that, but maybe first we could talk about funding. One of the imperatives of my research is looking at infrastructure with a hope that it might be able to affect some sort of policy change eventually. I know you participated in First Reels, but are there other things like that you did and could you tell me about your experience of going through those?

GS: Within Creative Scotland, I just wouldn’t go to Creative Scotland with a film idea because it would be—even if it was an experimental film that has the feel of *The Colour of Pomegranates*—if you wanted to make a film like that, I feel, there would be no interest for that within that film area of Creative Scotland [Screen Scotland]. Within the Visual Arts section, they would see it as ‘that’s film,’ so it could do neither because it has, albeit a very broken and abstract narrative and very strange images, it would be, ‘oh no, it’s not art, it’s neither one nor another.’

Even when I was applying for funding recently, I had a discussion with the officer who was leading on those applications and the discussion was, ‘you can’t say you’re going to make a film, it has to be a *projection work*.’ I mean, I make what I make, and you can call it whatever you like, but I think that’s a real barrier. Maybe there are people making really interesting work, in fact it’s most likely to be the people who are making really interesting work, who are going to fall down that gap because they don’t fit into one or the other. I’m not particularly interested in making a feature film although if somebody came along and said, ‘hey, you’ve got free reign,’ but I know that’s not what it’s like, absolutely no. I would last a day because I would want to work in instinctive ways which don’t fit with that paradigm, with that industry standard which I think has become very much the norm. The whole funding thing is built around that.

The other place I’ve had money from are places [Hope Scott Trust] and its actually really hard. They, at the time, said ‘we don’t really give to artists working with film.’ But I did manage to get something from them to develop a work that was being shown up in the Arctic Circle as part of the Luleå Biennial [*My Father, My Mother...*, 2003]. You do have to really be on it, and I don’t think I particularly am in terms of trimming down the story to ‘what are you about? Which gang are you in?’

So, local authorities, some of them have now got funding through Creative Scotland called VACMA [Visual Artist and Craft Makers Awards] that are administered through Creative Scotland though the local authorities actually organise who gets them, with input. Other than that, I've not approached Creative Scotland for money for quite a long time and the reason is that I don't feel that I fit in in either camp. 'She's a filmmaker' and then the filmmaking people will be like, 'she's definitely not.'

MJ: Do you think that sense of kicking the can, or that gap in between has gotten better or worse over time?

GS: I think it's got worse. There are examples, internationally, of artists who are working in that way, who are making very interactive, or space-sensitive works that are not about sitting in a darkened room, and they are also making works that are about sitting in a darkened room, being engulfed by this thing on the screen. Both forms are accepted. I guess Steve McQueen would be an example but loads of others, historically, I mean this has happened for a long time, artists working in that way, but it feels very difficult in Scotland and I don't know why. At the same time, I think, we can't complain because we actually do have a funding system. Down south, can you imagine, down south just seems utterly impossible to make work. You really do have to be quite privileged to be making work and I guess that makes me very angry, because I think there's still an element of that in Scotland. You have to be privileged in some way, either educationally or financially, to stand a chance of getting funding to make something kooky or interesting.

MJ: I wonder about other forms of artistic income. How do you distribute your work and has that changed?

GS: I haven't even gone anywhere near—I'm terrible in terms of making money from work. I don't tend to be of that, you mean trying to sell copies of films? [...] I just think they're unsellable. Who would be mad enough? That's just my particular mindset and maybe I'm a bit old fashioned in that respect but I just think I'm doing this mental thing, privately, not harming anybody. But, in terms of making an income from it, I've always seen the way I make an income as a practitioner is through that socially engaged practice, by running workshops. Actually, hiring work, that's interesting. Through Vimeo or whatever, having a system where people pay a fiver or something to watch your film. I guess I haven't really connected with LUX much to be honest, but that's my fault. I am actually quite driven as a person and a practitioner it's just that that drive is a bit compromised by my process of thinking, perhaps overthinking, where I can fit in.

MJ: I guess one of these other platforms is broadcast. Have you navigated through that at all?

GS: I did in the past. I put together applications to Channel 4, which at the time seemed that it had much more of a space for the kind of work that I might be doing. But, the only things that have been broadcast were things that were made with funding from Scottish Film Council or Creative Scotland which had a broadcast deal attached to it. They were then shown, or a clip shown, as part of a programme to showcase the artists or the filmmakers involved, but no, I haven't done that. I guess that's something that Mandy [McIntosh] has been much more on the ball with, in terms of making broadcast films. I think it takes different personalities maybe, I am a bit more introverted and the process of filmmaking when you're involved with television, even when it's in a very broad, creative forum, you're still—if it's television—going to go through lots and lots of different processes and lots of groups of people before it

actually hits the screen. I must admit, I face that start point and think, ‘nah, I’m off. I want to go into a cupboard somewhere and make something and somebody will invite me to show it.’ [...]

I’m really driven as an individual to keep making work but the thing of actually putting it out there, as you say, looking at broadcast commissions and things. I don’t even know broadcast commissions that are coming up that have that kind of brief, that would be much more open. Did I see something recently? Gillian Wearing doing something. I did, but it was awful, *Everything is Connected - George Eliot’s Life* [2019]. I just thought it was a total mismatch for her practice. What I felt was what happened there is that she was asked by the broadcasters, ‘oh that’ll be interesting as an artist,’ but what came out of it had been killed by the model of television programming.

MJ: I wonder if we could go from there, and this is just reflecting as an audience member as well as an artist, to film culture. I know that you’d shown at New Visions, do you remember what that was like? Do you remember going to anything else like that?

GS: Yeah, again, what fantastic events these were. So New Visions as a festival was brilliant because, again, lots of different venues: the old girls’ high school at the art school, CCA, there were loads of different spaces that were being utilised. Through GFVW and Street Level and all these organisations, all these people, artists, coming together to invigilate or to take part, to do a talk. Therefore, everybody was crossing paths across the town and there was a chance for new work to happen, for new ideas to take root, new collaborations to take root.

Also, what was really interesting about a lot of those things were the international artists that came in, showing quite obscure work. I remember some Russian filmmakers, and very bizarre films being shown, I would just love to go to something like that now, just to see something bizarre which opens your head up again. I think we really are very much constrained by, ‘oh, we can’t do anything too risky.’ There are silos again but they are very defined, you can show this kind of thing in that kind of situation, like what I’m imagining broadcast is like although I haven’t gone near it for a very long time. There’s a very discrete way of working so less room for wacky stuff to happen like these guys from Russia turning up and showing strange films. We need it, I think we need bizarre stuff like that. [...]

MJ: I wonder where else you were seeing stuff and what else was influencing you. What was coming into the city that you thought was important?

GS: I guess also at the time, the Third Eye Centre, what became the CCA, was quite critical as well in terms of visiting artists coming in and showing work. Sometimes installation work, we didn’t seem to have film screenings then. The GFT was a big place for screening films and for festivals happening. Also, individuals like Peter McCaughey ran screenings at this old derelict cinema on Jamaica Street in Glasgow, we used to go to screenings there, they were quite sporadic. That kind of thing was really huge because you were connecting with people who were doing the same thing as you, you’d all have disparate interests but you were able to connect and to look at work and talk about it and talk about processes of getting funding, showing work. I think because a lot of it was happening, it continued to happen for a long time, but the more it dissipated the less was there, the less could happen. Then at Street Level there was a regular thing that happened as well, I can’t remember the names of these events, they might have been a development of Café Flicker. [...] Fotofeis was another forum where I showed films, others too, as part of an installation in and around the building at Greenock docks.

MJ: One of the things I'm interested in mining is the idea of Scotland as a context and questioning nationhood, questions of what makes this context different to others. Relating to that, is there anything you've noticed that distinguishes Scotland from other contexts?

GS: I think for starters, because there is so little funding down south, up here there is more experimentation because historically we seem to have done quite a lot of little groups getting together. There is loads of this down south as well but they didn't have the kind of backing from various cities, like Glasgow City Council, by way of rent reduction and also through festivals like Glasgow 1990—albeit within conflicting political and artistic sensibilities—put in a lot of support to Transmission, and a lot of support to other small organisations that were being run at the time, who were supporting artists and filmmakers like myself.

When I go down south and talk to people from down south, there's just very little, it's very much concentrated in London and then in other areas like Leeds with Leeds Animation Workshop, where there are specific types of workshops and things going on. Here I think, what makes it different, the funding is a big part of it, maybe there's less expectation of funding in the way that people think down south. There's much more of an idea that you pay for education, therefore you pay to do your practice, is there a historical basis for that way of thinking, I think there might be.

MJ: Related to that but thinking about the collected practice of people working in Scotland, do you think there's anything Scottish or particular about work here? About what people make here?

GS: Trying to think across all that stuff, all the years and the work that I've seen, I think the work that I've been really interested in is people making short or experimental works for galleries is going to be quite a small demographic of folk anyway who are working in that way, so maybe of a particular mindset and I don't think so, not that I can see. There are obvious things like the landscape and the climate are going to affect the content of what you make work about to a certain extent and I know for me it has had an effect on the aesthetics in terms of what I choose to film, when I'm filming and the subject matter.

I guess that sense of being a separate nation, I do think there's quite a strong feeling that generally, I know we didn't get independence in the end, but especially amongst the artist community, there seems to be quite a strong sense of there being a Scottish scene and a Scottish identity. For example, the Scottish Artists' Union, that was another big thing that happened, Janie Nicoll was involved in setting that up and that again, supporting artists making work. I don't know that many places—I think they have the English arts council—but is it because of the scale of Scotland, we are a pretty small nation, a small country anyway, and we also have these very disparate communities in Orkney and the Hebrides, that has to have some kind of impact on our psyche, the kinds of films that we make and what we make films about, but I don't know.

MJ: What do you think Scotland would need for artists' moving image, or however you want to call it, what would it need to enhance its profile or be more sustainable? What would be the plaster?

GS: I think dedicated spaces for a start, not just in the big cities but in smaller towns and there's just no getting away from it, but it needs some kind of funding that doesn't depend on income generation. Once an organisation has to start generating its income—for example, a

film or video focused organisation—you have to generate enough income to have one member of staff then you're already going down a commercial route and that already shifts the balance of where the interests and where the energy is within that organisation. So, there has to be statutory funding for organisations. for collectives to exist, to support collectives.

There's an element of volunteering, and for people to do their own thing and not being tied to the organisation, to its agenda and an element to of statutory funding to allow that to flourish. Spaces. Suitable spaces where people can have little studio spaces where they can set up to do, for example, animation. If people want to do animation, they're either in a cupboard at home somewhere or... to actually hire a space, to have a studio to make an animation or a work that involved that kind of intense taking over of space for a certain amount of time. Yeah, spaces, statutory funding, the space for collectives to flourish and be supported, and within that space that they can also have the public come in and view work.

Also, I think, if broadcast companies like BBC Scotland had a genuine interest in supporting much more arts oriented—having an arts channel, real kooky stuff being transmitted, even if it was twelve o'clock at night, God that would be amazing. That would really start a conversation. That conversation is very much absent, BBC Scotland is uptight. It's a very distinct organisation and its still public schoolboy oriented, unfortunately, it really is. What comes from that is a particular mindset and a particular kind of work. I'm talking about people who aren't necessarily creative wanting to have authorship over the kind of creatively chaotic ideas and filmmaking processes that couldn't possibly have taken root in their minds but they can and do dominate the production processes via access to budgets and of course the broadcast system itself.

Someone like Adam Curtis manages to grab hold of the 'conch' with amazing films but it's hard to ignore the fact that he too is from a privileged background—a filmmaking dad and then Oxford-educated—he is obviously familiar with the language, ways of manoeuvring around the system. I think if there was a genuine space within BBC Scotland and regionalised channels to actually show work, to transmit strange work, that would be fantastic, or artists to present installation works and just to talk about ideas, even sporadic five-minute slots, how fantastic would that be? Of course, you'd get people saying 'these people are nuts, what a lot of crap,' but that's a conversation, it's better than nothing.

L. Alia Syed

Marcus Jack: To start, maybe you could just tell me a little bit about your trajectory into working with moving image, starting as early as you like?

Alia Syed: I left Glasgow when I was seventeen and came to London and then did A-levels here then went to Sir John Cass to do a foundation course and then went to what was then called North East London Polytechnic. So that was when I started to think about—well, I don't really think that I ever imagined that I was going to become a filmmaker, it's just that I fell into filmmaking simply because when I joined that fine art department, there were separate departments, so, there was the painting department, sculpture department, and a 3D department, and you spent six weeks in each department to begin with. So, when I went to the film department they showed us film cameras and I just thought that the film cameras were really beautiful and basically, we were just shown how to load a Bolex, we were given some black and white film, shown how to read the light meter and then you could go out and do some filming. I had never—because when I was at school I was considered to be a good painter and draftsman—I had never done photography so that was my first experience of the photographic medium. There was the material aspect but also, at the time, there was Greenham Common, the miners' dispute, lots of things that I was quite involved with politically and then the people in the film and video department were more political, so I just gravitated towards that department because there were discussions that I was interested in and also I actually really fell in love—because we were shown how to develop film—with that whole process.

MJ: What year would it have been that you moved from Glasgow to London?

AS: So, I was born in 1964, and I was 17, so 1964 plus 17.

MJ: 1981, 1982, is that right?

AS: Yes, 1983 sort of thing. So, then I basically stayed in the film department and I suppose prior to that I had played the flute and also wrote and I drew so I suppose it brought lots of different things that I was doing together. I was someone who used to get on the bus and draw, I was constantly drawing but essentially as soon as I started making films I just stopped all of that. When I did my first degree that's when I started thinking about film.

MJ: Prior to that, maybe during your time in Scotland, do you remember engaging in film culture or was that something that was available to you?

AS: No, I didn't engage with film culture. I mean I watched films. As I left I was becoming aware of like the punk rock movement. I watched films, I watched mainstream films but I wasn't like someone who was hooked on cinema. I was never a film buff, if you see what I mean.

MJ: So, you've gone through education and then what happens?

AS: Basically, the education leads on to the films. I got into making films and that's how I made sense of the world and that's how I made sense of myself in that world. I could articulate a lot of thing that I might not have been able to articulate in relation to myself, as a young woman living in London. I was involved in the feminist movement so all of those issues basically became combined within the practice. Then I left the University of East

London which was North East London Polytechnic. While I was there I got very involved in processing my own stuff, so I used to film my own stuff, edit and process the film—I used to play around with the printer quite a lot.

When I left that, after my first degree, I was encouraged to go to the London Film-Makers' Co-op because they heard and saw my work which was processed by myself, so then I got a job there processing black and white film. I also got a grant from the arts council for £500 which they gave to, I don't know, eight students after they'd left. It was one of those things. My social network then was the London Film-Makers' Co-op and everyone was making films, so you just carry on doing what you're doing, it's not like 'oh, I'm a professional filmmaker.' It just became part and parcel of my life.

MJ: Can you remember anything about that community? Was it quite a small world or was it expansive?

AS: Worlds are expansive or small according to how you operate within them. For me, initially it felt quite expansive because I was meeting lots of new people. Then, as I was there, I was becoming more aware of the Black Arts Movement and things like that in relation to culture and race. I suppose, at the London Film-Makers' Co-op itself there was a group of people who were quite keen to diversify but—I mean my work was respected there, what I was doing was considered to be of note. So, on one hand, yes it was quite a small community, and I suppose that's one of the criticisms of the London Film-Makers' Co-op but at the same time, things are exclusive but these networks are formed around interest in very small, niche subjects, so it's not like—I agree with the ideas of making things accessible and I understand the power relationships in particular institutions at particular times but I also am not someone who thinks that it should just be accessible for accessibility's sake. I think it's very important to have a dialogue about particularities of voice, language and experimentation and I think those discussions are really important. I think you need to find balance, an awareness of how these things can be excluding but also how these things can be empowering to people who may need to be empowered. For me in particular, that's how I found my voice.

MJ: And at this time, early on, where were you finding support or exhibitions, how was the work existing?

AS: The London Film-Makers' Co-op had a distribution network, they were shown at the London Film-Makers' Co-op and then in film festivals around the world, mainly North America and Europe. Then there were the arts council touring bodies that went around the country. There were places like, in Birmingham, the Ikon Gallery, I was in a show with Shaheen Merali called *Black Waters*.

I think the first time I got shown in Glasgow was at the Glasgow Film Festival but that didn't really happen until after I'd gone to the Slade. So, I went to the University of East London for three years, then I worked at the London Film-Makers for about two years and made a couple of films there, and then I went to the Slade. At the Slade, that's when things shifted or started to shift in relation to the experimental film network. I think that was primarily to do with technology and then technology opened up a different sort of space in the gallery and at the same time the independent film circuit was then getting less funding, funding was going away. So, the whole thing was becoming less—London at that point, you had the GLC, there was a lot of money going into the arts and I think that was probably sort—similar

environments existed throughout the country, in Scotland and probably Europe and North America.

But then the whole sector has become more and more privatised. So, then it moved, those conversations we were having in the film circuits probably then moved slightly more into the direction of the gallery. When I was a student at the University of East London I was quite adamant that one of the reasons I was a filmmaker was that you couldn't sell films, I thought! So, I was quite anti-the gallery system, for me, I felt that the experimental film thing was more open than the gallery, because at least that brought in different sort of disciplines within that environment, came and went.

MJ: What year would this movement have happened, concurrent with you going to the Slade?

AS: I mean, I didn't really notice it when I was at the Slade but I began to notice it after I'd left. I don't know when Steve McQueen—it was happening but there was always that tension because I studied in fine art so there was always the tension of having a gallery space or projecting the films or what that was. That was something that I've always been aware of but I didn't really take it—well I did take it into account but I wasn't interested in the gallery as a site, as an institutional site, a political site, in any way. Now everyone calls themselves artist-filmmakers because everyone puts everything in the gallery, me included, but that's something that I have reconciled myself with I suppose. I can't tell you when that happened at the Slade—I'm not very good with dates. I suppose after I'd left it was the early 1990s, so things began to shift slightly then.

MJ: When you mentioned technology do you mean the digital projector as the driver of that?

AS: DVDs, I mean the DVD was the thing that allowed people suddenly to make DVD editions and use digital projection in a gallery space, it was easy to do and actually cost effective.

MJ: So, would you say that in that sense you're an analogue purist or are you quite happy for scans to be shown?

AS: No, I'm not analogue purist and I'm not happy for scans do be shown, I think 16mm film is different to video, it's a different medium. I think you have to have a different awareness of what you're doing in relation to those two mediums. A lot of my work, I insist to be shown as 16mm and then some of my work is sourced on digital technology so then obviously that's fine. I suppose for me then I rethought my relationship to 16mm film after I had got an AHRC grant to think about how gallery culture was different to film culture, thinking about how technology forms new cultures and also thinking about that in relation to notions of what culture is, within audiences and communities, class, race, and all of that. How are those boundaries talked about, how are they constrained and how are they expanded in relation to those spaces? That made me rethink my relationship to 16mm [...] I got the AHRC research post in 2004.

MJ: I guess prior to that, one of the things I was interested in talking to you about was the show at GoMA which was in 2002. Do you remember much about that?

AS: Only being very disappointed. After being very excited about the fact that I was finally having a show in Scotland, I thought, ‘oh, finally people might realise that I’m a Scottish filmmaker.’ But, that was organised by Iniva: [Institute of] International Visual Arts, and that was when Gilane Tawadros was director. I was really happy that that was going to happen but at that time all the artists in Glasgow or in Scotland were boycotting GoMA. So, nobody came to my show. I was really pissed off. I just thought, ‘what small-minded, mealy-mouthed, idiotic—you know, what the fuck.’ So, nothing happened in that. I don’t know to what extent that was the fault—I think probably the person who curated it was Bruce Haines, so I don’t think they understood what the artistic cultural networks were in Scotland but apparently I could have had that show at what is now the CCA, when I was growing up in Glasgow it was The Third Eye Centre, which is one of the places that I always did go to when I was like sixteen [...] that is one of the things that I did do. There was some boycott going on with all of the Scottish artists because they didn’t feel that GoMA was representing Scottish artists. Therefore, they didn’t go to my show, I could have had my show at the CCA, but I didn’t know that and I didn’t know about the history, I just thought that GoMA would be fine.

MJ: Do you think you’ve since found acceptance within a Scottish art history, or a place within that?

AS: I think I have since, but that’s to do with things like Kim Knowles’ *Black Box* at the Edinburgh Film Festival. I think that was one of your questions actually because I was thinking, what was important. Then, obviously since I made *Points of Departure* [2014], and that did well, but also, as I’ve gotten older I’ve come back to Scotland or I’ve become interested in Scotland and felt more of an affinity to Scotland. That’s just one of those things that happens. A lot of that is to do with how politics in Scotland has changed, I’m sort of interested in that, from a post-colonial perspective, this notion of how does the nation-state get formed? What are the criteria and how does that nationalism fit or not fit into notions of inclusivity or egalitarianism? I’ve becoming interested in it and when I was in Scotland, looking after my dad, was during the independence referendum. What shifted was the Glasgow [European] City of Culture [1990] because lots of things happened and I did start to get invited to Scotland, it was quite different really. I don’t think anyone really thought I was Scottish and I think that’s racism basically.

MJ: Were you born in Glasgow or born in Wales?

AS: No, born in Wales, so in actual fact I’m not Scottish ethnically at all, my mum is Welsh and Irish and my dad was from India. I suppose when we were living in Glasgow, we lived in suburbia so it was very like small-minded. We were always the foreigners on all different fronts because my mum was not from that environment either. It was that typical thing of my dad wanting to have—well, he came from India, so there’s lots of different migrations from India and Pakistan but he’s from quite an upper-middle class background—so he wanted a big house to live and he was a physician, worked in the Western Infirmary. We lived in suburbia but that was the death of us, totally, but my dad never noticed that because he was just going to his work. I think if I had grown up in the West End or even somewhere in the Southside, I might not have left. But, because of where we were situated, I felt increasingly isolated.

MJ: So, the move to London, was that based on a need to get out of the city?

AS: Yeah, I just had to leave home. My mum, by that time—so my parent divorced when I was quite young—so my mum was in London. We were brought up with my dad, then my mum was in London, so when I was seventeen I just took up sticks and left and did not look back, until much later.

MJ: I guess, thinking about returning—is *Points of Departure* the only work you've made in Scotland?

AS: No, and I've made *Clippy* [2015].

MJ: Could you tell me about how those came into being?

AS: Yes, so my father was ill and basically, I was looking after him and had more or less decided that ultimately, I was going to move back to Glasgow. It became apparent that in order to care for my father I would need to move back. But, also, I knew people and artists in Glasgow so it didn't feel like I was moving out or losing something, so I was sort of resigned to thinking that maybe that could be a good thing to do. Then I saw this application to work in the BBC Scotland Artists in Archives, then I applied to that and I got it. That was great because then also I was working with four or five other artists all from Glasgow. [...]

One of the things that I was always interested in was representation so coming back to Glasgow—I mean I would come back to Glasgow a lot because obviously my dad was there—but I became increasingly aware of the lack of representation of the Asian communities in Scotland and so that was my question, really, to the archive and to Glasgow, to Scotland: what was the place and how had the Asian community been contextualised in Scotland? So that was the question to the archive because the notion of the archive is that the archive holds all of our memories and we can look back to it and we'll find ourselves in that archive, whereas I sort of knew that I wasn't going to find myself in that archive, so that was my quest. It was like the quest that Roland Barthes has to find the photograph of his mother, I knew that I wasn't going to find it but that was the avenue that I was going to pursue in order to make the film. At the same time my father was ill and I was going through my own archive and I was reconciling stuff to do with myself and Glasgow and everything—so, those two things came about in *Points of Departure*.

Then because of that, I found this one clip—I think I told you about that before—but I found this one clip in the archive, because I was interested in bus conductors as well because I always remember lots of Asian bus conductors when I was growing up and that's one of the things I enjoyed about going in to Glasgow, was the bus conductors. So, I was looking at bus conductors and I put that phrase into the archive computer—so how I used the archive was that I put dates in that were relevant to me, this one clip came up that was of a funeral march on the Dumbarton Road, led by two men of colour, and I wanted to put that in film, I really loved that shot. But, because of the criteria of what was I was thinking about in relation to my film, that shot obviously couldn't go in.

When I got shortlisted for the Jarman Award, then I was given some money to make a three-minute film, so I proposed to make a film around that one shot. I came back to Glasgow—I was in Glasgow quite a lot after *Points of Departure* and after my dad died—and I did lots of research and lots of interviews with elderly Asian men and that sort of superseded a three-minute film, but I made that film, and realised that a lot of that research was very interesting and I was quite compelled by a lot of these stories and how they resonated or didn't resonate with me.

So, then I did this course with Film London for artists who want to make feature films, all of that research that went into making *Clippy* was going to go into making a feature film that was going to be based in Glasgow, around the Asian community in Glasgow. As a byproduct of that whole thing I then started working with two producers, Barry Crerar. So, I was working with them and they were really good but I felt that they were pushing me into making a much more traditional sort of film, I wasn't that comfortable with it but also, I think it was too early for me to narrow down my research in a way. I didn't want to make this monocultural, this idea of *a* Asian community or *a* Scottish-Asian community and talk about it in those terms because it's not something that I'm interested in.

I suppose my practice is expansive and talks about how these boundaries or disciplines become embedded and what are the discourse of power within them. I didn't want to make that sort of film. I've always wanted to go back to that research, and so that's why I applied for a residency at the CCA, so that is going to be happening in January 2021. I suppose this whole time I would have been coming up to Scotland, so that I was going to make more connections, reconnect with the people that I interviewed and talk about how I was going to do that thing, but at the moment that's on hold. I need to start thinking about it in different ways, basically. That is why I thought I would answer your question in that yes, I'm still making films and still interested in this notion of what is Scotland? And, how do we take that apart? I mean I would only be interested in this notion if it was a radical gesture, if at the same time thinking specificity you also you take into account what is the international agenda. How do these breakdown? I think a lot of what this Scottish identity thing is based on is a whole load of romantic bullshit, it's invented, more to do with *Braveheart* than anything else.

I mean, I'm a socialist! I'm only interested in this in relation to ideas of colonialism and identity as something that is fluid. That was why I'm still interested in doing this thing because I've also become aware that a lot of the Asian community are very much invested in this idea of the Scottish identity. That, for me, is also interesting and that's one of the reasons that I left because actually I didn't like the Scottish national flag, whatever experience I had of that was negative. All of a sudden, it's changed, or has it changed? I don't know.

MJ: It's interesting. Others have mentioned this confusing context that Scotland occupies between colonised and coloniser at once and how that's sort of unresolvable. I think maybe, if I could just go on to some of these questions, just to mine your views on some elements, that would be great. The first is, maybe looking outwith your own practice, and looking at events or activities relating to Scotland that you think might have been significant? I know previously, you'd mentioned a women's conference and a Pakistani film festival.

AS: Have you interviewed Laura Hudson? Do you know about Laura Hudson? She used to work at the Glasgow Women's Library, she came to London and she was involved for a little while with the London Film-Maker's Co-op, this is all around Glasgow European City of Culture. My memory is that then she organised a group of women from the London Film-Maker's Co-op to come up to Glasgow and there was—it wasn't a conference—sort of dialogues between women from the London Film-Maker's Co-op and Glasgow women who were making films.

So that happened and [...] in 2003 I made *Eating Grass* and then at some point it got shown in—I don't know if it was the film festival but there was something that happened in Glasgow. Then after that, and I don't know what the date was, there was organised a

Scottish-Pakistani film festival. Two or three people came from Pakistan and then there were people from Scotland and I came, and that was a conference and that happened at the GFT, I think, mainly. I haven't found any of that paraphernalia. I was going to ask Charlotte Procter at Cinenova if she knew about it and I asked my friend and she couldn't remember either but they were the two things.

I actually think, for me, the whole thing shifted through Kim Knowles' programming at the Edinburgh Film Festival and the artists in residence at the BBC Scotland. I suppose, Glasgow European City of Culture was a big shifting thing because lots of stuff was organised around that and then the other thing was *Black Box*, Kim Knowles, coming up to Edinburgh Film Festival for that. For me, they were the important things and then also LUX Scotland. I think that's a really important thing that people gravitate towards. I don't know how inclusive or exclusive artists in Scotland think about LUX Scotland because there's a lot of—I mean I'm quite involved with the LUX—but there are a lot of people who are quite critical of it in relation to what artists they show and the emphasis they put on particular artists, which is something that LUX acknowledges but I suppose I wouldn't be aware of critiques of LUX Scotland from Scottish filmmakers or artists but I would imagine that there's probably the same sort of questioning that goes on in relation to the LUX in London.

MJ: Related to that, from a London position, do you understand through peers or colleagues how Scotland is viewed or whether there's a sense of what's happening north of the border?

AS: Only that everyone's very jealous, we all think we should move back to Scotland. I just know that Ben loves Glasgow and Scotland, when LUX have their meetings we are having meetings with LUX Scotland and LUX, so it's the same organisation, or it's not the same organisation but they are sister organisations. There is no tension in relation to that and I don't really think people have a sense of Glasgow or Scotland being parochial in that sense any more, or if they ever did.

For me, I was very much in that sort of experimental filmmaking discipline so people didn't really go—Margaret Tait was important and all of that but I think everyone looked to North America, both from Scotland and England. That's how these things work, you don't look to your nearest neighbour, you go across. I wouldn't be able to comment but I do think that because of LUX Scotland there is a lot more dialogue between artists in Scotland and England but then a lot of artists from England have gone to Scotland because actually they think there's more opportunity in Scotland. I think that that could be true because there are less people in Scotland. Everyone thinks that everyone in London's got it easy but actually it's very competitive. There may be more money in London but there are more people, so per capita I'm not sure. There's this idea that Scotland thinks everything's rich and paved with gold in London but I don't know that that's true—and vice versa I suppose.

MJ: The grass is always greener. [...] I guess a better or more pointed question for you might be, thinking about a body of work across Scottish artists that you might have seen, is there anything in that body that you might think of as Scottish or is 'Scottishness' a useful term?

AS: I think it can be useful term but all these terms are only useful in relation to how they—if I'm going to describe myself in relation to Britain, I am Scottish, I would never be English, I might be British but I would never be English. It's about how people react to what they perceive as the centre and if they see themselves outside of that centre I think you tend to

form more interesting allegiance and critiques of what that centre is, I think that Scottishness is equally a valid term as Blackness or Asianness, the notion of what a periphery is and how it can find alternative structures. But I don't think any of those terms are useful if they just form another centre, so I would answer it that way.

MJ: The idea of Scottishness is always relational to an Englishness.

AS: The thing I'm very aware of as somebody who grew in Scotland is that Scotland actually formed a lot of its identity in relation to France. Religious, Catholics and Ireland. So actually, there's a much stronger connection between Scotland, Ireland and France that goes back a long way historically. For me, Scotland is much more European than England because if you take England out of the equation, there's a lot more stuff going on, especially if you look at all the students who come to Glasgow from the Scandinavian countries, there's a big influx that way so the migration patterns in Scotland are actually quite different to the migration patterns in England. So, those are the relationships that I'd be more interested in thinking about as opposed to Scotland and England, because I'm bored shitless with that one.

I'm bored with this notion of England, I don't want to talk about an idea of England. As far as I'm concerned it is and always has been totally redundant because it always gets bound up in this notion of nationalism and for me why Scottish nationalism might be more interesting and more radical is because of these other connections. London is brilliant because it's made up people who come from all over the place, that's why London's brilliant and why London is not so brilliant any more is because as a cultural city it's dying because of the privatisation of housing, so London itself—I'm lucky because I got here when I was quite young and became a member of a housing co-op, and hopefully there might be a resurgence—but in actual fact that's why a lot of people are going back to Scotland or people who are not Scottish are going back to Scotland, because of those things that are happening.

M. Sarah Tripp

Marcus Jack: To start then Sarah, I guess, maybe if you could just tell me a bit about, in the broadest sense, your trajectory as an artist and as arts worker, maybe starting with art school?

Sarah Tripp: Okay, well, I originally went to Glasgow University and studied psychology, sociology and history. Then after a year of that, I decided it wasn't for me, and I transferred to the art school, Glasgow School of Art. There I did a first-year foundation year and then I went on and did a degree in painting. By the time I graduated, I realised that I wanted to work in moving image. I went to London to do an MA at Chelsea, towards the end of that MA I began to work with moving image installation, 8mm film. Then I stayed in London another couple of years, mainly working at Camden Art Centre, then I returned to Glasgow to take a post on the Transmission Gallery committee. After I did that for about a year and a half, I left and I worked as a designer for a few years in Glasgow, initially at Graven Images. I left and went on to do freelance graphic design, I did that for a number of years, working for the CCA and other clients. After that I really started teaching more regularly on the MFA at Glasgow.

MJ: Just to start pinning a bit of a structure to that timeline, could I ask about the years of a few things. So, you started and finished art school—when was that?

ST: 1989, I began university. So, in 1990 I started art school. In 1994 I graduated, then 1995–1996 I was in London, then around 1996–1997 I came back to do Transmission. I was in Glasgow for a while and then about 1999 I made a film called *Anti-Prophet* with the CCA which was the first documentary that I made, which was quite long, about an hour. In about 2000 it showed at the Manifesta in Slovenia. I'd been making moving image experiments before that with First Reels.

MJ: If I could dig in a bit earlier, just as you were leaving art school, do you remember what sort of work you were making? What sort of stuff you were seeing? And, the community and scene around that time, do you remember anything about that?

ST: Not very much. When I left in 1994 I was aware of the Transmission Gallery. *Windfall* happened, that was a big show.

MJ: That was 1991.

ST: Yeah, so by 1994 we were aware of the traction of *Windfall*. Douglas Gordon and Christine Borland, we were aware of that. I was also interested in like *The Draughtsman's Contract* [Peter Greenaway, 1982]. Around that time the GMAC was really important. I spending a lot of time at the GFT. There was lots of [Jean-Luc] Godard. I was just learning the basics, that's what was going on at that point. I was starting to read *Frieze* magazine but, to be honest, I wasn't very aware of what was going on around me quite frankly. [...] Charles Esche, Will Bradley were around, it was really male-dominated to be honest. There was just avant-garde film really, avant-garde film at the GFT.

MJ: Did that feel like something quite separate to fine art?

ST: At that point yes. I think Peter Greenaway went to art school so we were aware that people had come from art school and done other things but yes it did feel quite separate. You could make independent film that was really very exciting. The kinds of things that would be

shown at the GFT were very exciting. That is something that I wanted to do. I think I went to see some of the First Reels screenings before I applied, so that was all very interesting.

MJ: In terms of the art scene as a social space, did you feel like you were in the same community as people like Douglas Gordon or was that quite separate?

ST: Completely separate. I'm trying to remember how I moved towards film and I think I was spending a lot of time at the GFT basically and began to be aware that I could make film myself. Just make 16mm or Super 8 at the Glasgow Film and Video Workshop. [...] Somebody suggested that I go down there. Doing a course in 8mm, Super 8, that was really pivotal as well. About a decade later that became known as GMAC: Glasgow Media Access Centre. That was pivotal: the GFT, then Glasgow Film and Video Workshop—then GMAC—because that was where you could get a camera, that's where you'd get your equipment and that's where you would learn how to use camera.

MJ: Could you tell me a bit about that work? I've seen a couple of things via the Moving Image Archive, I've seen *Two Days in Spring* [1997] and *Testatika* [2001] and a film called *Me and Her* [2006], that's 1997 to 2006 but what were you doing before that?

ST: They're terrible films Marcus! I just hope that nobody ever sees them. I'm desperately trying to bury them. I made a First Reels film really early on called *Weather Vain* [1993]. I think Hayley Tompkins and I made it together. It was just shot on Super 8 and the reason why I made that and applied to First Reels was because I'd seen films the year before made by First Reels. At the GFT there would have been a screening and I'd been to the workshop and done the training, so that came to be. I don't think I made anything after that for a while, then I started exposing 8mm film when I was in London on my MA.

MJ: How did you find these schemes? Were they quite open to experimentation?

ST: Yes! Really supportive and really good.

MJ: Was finding that resource easy enough to do?

ST: Yeah, I think probably. I would have joined the Glasgow Film and Video Workshop and I imagine that what would have happened would be that they would have sent in their newsletter a deadline for First Reels and that's how I would have known to apply. It was pre-email. Or, I would have been to the Glasgow Film and Video Workshop and would have seen a poster up about First Reels. [...] Everything went through Glasgow Film and Video Workshop or the GFT.

MJ: Was there a sense that a community was assembled around the Film and Video Workshop?

ST: Yes!

MJ: And, who might have been part of that?

ST: Well, Mandy McIntosh. There was a woman called Aimara [Reques] whose surname I can't remember but used to teach there. There was another woman who ended up working for the BBC. If you went back to look at the Glasgow Film and Video Workshop, I think it was like Transmission, there was a committee of people. [...] There's been various people, like

there are round Transmission, who ran and delivered courses and so on, and you could hire equipment from them.

MJ: Reflecting on today, GMAC and Transmission couldn't be further apart in what they do but back then were they part of the same set?

ST: I have no idea, because at that point I wasn't really aware of what was going on at the Transmission. I mean, I left art school and then I can't remember. I think I did the First Reels thing in the final year of art school actually and then I went away, that would have been 1994. At that point I'd already done the course, I must have already been involved with the Glasgow Film and Video Workshop. Anne-Marie Copestake, you could speak to her—I think maybe she was there really early. I wasn't involved in Transmission until maybe two or three years later. I had really no idea of what a scene was, I was at art school so my whole social group was at art school. [...] When I went to Glasgow Film and Video Workshop, I would have been there as a student so I wasn't really aware of any group or scene and most of the other students weren't either. [...] Back then it was pre-email. [...] So, you weren't aware of it really. It's hard to explain this because it's pre-online: someone would be like, 'go do a training course at Glasgow Film and Video Workshop,' you'd be like, 'okay where is it.' At that point it was out of town somewhere, so you'd get a bus and I remember going and you'd turn and they'd give you a leaflet and there were posters on a board telling you what was happening. Then you'd have to go home and send in a cheque for your course—you know what I mean? I'm pretty sure that's where I met Anne-Marie Copestake, at Glasgow Film and Video Workshop. I can't remember if she was at art school or not, or if she'd left. It was just completely different. The awareness of something like an art scene or film scene, I wouldn't have even been conscious of something like that until much, much later.

MJ: So, after you've come back from your Masters, does an awareness build then?

ST: It felt like that there was—the Scottish Film Council were supporting the production of moving image works and the arts council were supporting, you know, art exhibitions, production of artists works and the Transmission Gallery and these kinds of organisations. And, that's all there was, there was no commercial—nothing commercial happening at all, that was the situation. It seemed quite separate to me but it wasn't a problem, that's just how the landscape was.

MJ: Would it have been unusual to have then being someone working on the Transmission committee and also making films?

ST: No, it would have been fine because there were precedents for that. Most of the films I was watching, I was interested in, were made by artists but it wasn't like there was artists' moving image, that wasn't a category.

MJ: So, at this point when you were showing work, was that in cinemas or galleries or both?

ST: Yeah, both, I suppose. I got involved later on with things like Digicult, which was run by Paul Welsh, and that was funding, that was more funding. It was more like £10k or £20k for a film. At that point, as funding ramped up, I became aware that there were two very different support structures. One was for artists' moving image, which was primarily lower-budget, and then there was film funding which was higher-budget, but that was very narrative driven.

They were quite separate and that would be, probably, late 1990s, early 2000s. It was definitely two separate—they had very different cultures.

MJ: Did you find that the commissioning programmes that you were working with, were they starting to take that more kind of indie direction?

ST: Well things like Digicult, First Reels—I can't remember them all—it's quite a lot of different funding that had money put in by the Scottish Film Council.

MJ: The Scottish Film Production Fund?

ST: Yeah, these kinds of things. There were lots of strands and funds. Development was really important, there was a lot for script development and that was what was quite different, you'd have script development for those strands and really, at that point, there wasn't anything—I mean LUX maybe existed but I wasn't aware of it—so there was nothing like LUX really active to support artists.

N. Ann Vance

Marcus Jack: It would be great to know how you got into working with film and video, maybe starting with your education?

Ann Vance: I studied Painting at Glasgow School of Art, I started in 1983. I was really busy with painting for most of that time but I do remember in fourth year I was getting a bit disillusioned with it. We had the Glasgow Boys in profile at that time, and it was all very figurative: Peter Howson, Ken Currie, Adrian Wiszniewski, Steven Campbell. It was all very big and figurative and domineering. I was getting a bit disillusioned, I was reading a lot of film theory, linked in with feminist theory, so I think it was about then that I—this is where I'm flummoxed a bit—it might have been at Transmission that I saw a first batch of videos and that was curated by Malcolm. [...] The EventSpace project. I remember a lot of old U-Matic tapes from London Video Arts, from where LUX came from, the merger between LVA which then became London Electronic Arts and the Film-Makers' Co-op. I think it was around then that I was first really getting interested in film because it was my postgraduate year that I started using Super 8. I borrowed a camera from Laura Hudson, she was in the Environmental Art department at the time. Laura later went on to run the Film-Makers' Co-op in London. So, she lent me her Super 8 camera and that was me, I was hooked then.

I do remember as well, seeing Malcolm Le Grice, all the seminal 1960s filmmakers, 1970s stuff—structural film. Particularly, the one that inspired me the most was Birgit Hein, *Die Kali-Filme* [1987–1988]. [...] I saw that at the Film-Makers' Co-op in London but I can't remember if I went specifically to see that programme or if I had just wandered in. That was a really inspiring time to see these films, I think I had been reading mostly about them and there was no way of seeing them in Scotland so you literally had to go to London, then, even to see what you were reading about. There was no screening facility, distribution here and there was no exhibition of experimental film and I wasn't aware of the Fringe Film & Video Festival at that point. A lot of this stuff wasn't even distributed, you know. I was reading a lot about the American filmmakers. It was all London-based really, so you had to go. I don't remember if I went to London specifically to see that programme, or if I was just desperate to get to the Film-Makers' Co-op and just soak up the atmosphere.

I started in 1988. I did a postgraduate in 1988 and after leaving art school, I joined the Transmission committee. I organised a screening of touring programme at the time, it was a programme of German women's films, it may have come from Cinenova—I'm not sure—but we screened that at Transmission. I'm sure there was a programme of Scottish film or video screened as well, I recall a work by Elsie Mitchell that was included. I was working on another programme looking at Cinenova catalogues as well as other distributors and just doing some research at that point, but that didn't come to fruition because I moved to Amsterdam to study at the Rijksakademie.

I went there specifically with the aim of working in the film department there, which was really, literally just a small room with a couple of cameras, Super 8, 16mm. It wasn't a department as such, nobody was really using film. I did that. In Amsterdam I was away from 1989 to 1992, and I was involved in film and video exhibition over there. I had a one-person show at Time Based Arts. Now, Time Based Arts was quite a well-known gallery at the time for screening film and video and media. I was also included in a group show of artists based at Rijksakademie, curated by Ute Janssen at Time Based Arts. Video was just coming up as an art form within the galleries, we didn't really have much recognition for the art form in Scotland at that point, or even in the UK, within the galleries. It was mainly—if you were to

see screenings—it was in the cinema site. The gallery was yet to come, when video projection became a lot bigger and more widespread. I had a show there. There was Montevideo as well, which was a great gallery for video in Amsterdam, you'd see lots of European artists in Montevideo. Time Based Arts was getting a wee bit run down, it was, at the time, run by a committee which included a British artist called David Garcia. David taught in Dundee as a visiting lecturer, I think. At that time Steve Partridge would have been up there and involved in lecturing at the art school. I don't know if you're familiar with David? He ran *The Next 5 Minutes* festival in Amsterdam. Somehow, he ended up in Amsterdam.

I concentrated mainly on film and video in Amsterdam and came back to Glasgow in 1992. I got involved with the New Visions festival, that was the first year of New Visions—Malcolm Dickson and Doug Aubrey had initiated that, it came out of the EventSpace trajectory that Malcolm would have probably talked about. I was involved in the first festival just as an artist, I was around and helping out a bit but I screened a work there in 1992 and then I got roped in to organising, curating, towards the second festival which was 1994. It was every two years, and we had a third in 1996.

During that time, I guess I was just really keen to get work to Glasgow and to see work, it was more for selfish reasons to be honest, to see work. We had amazing responses to the festival. You had various festivals around Europe at that time: AVE festival in Arnhem in Holland, was really popular for artists' film and video; Oberhausen Festival; the Berlin Short Film Festival, there were various things going on. With New Visions I wondered what kind of response we would get but we received around 500 submissions, showed about half of them. I would programme the works, I viewed every single work. We were always a bit resistant to introducing themes or making demands on artists, 'oh, this is the festival theme this year.' So, we were a bit resistant to that, so we just took what came in. There was a selection panel so the works were selected, not everything got in which was a pity but we'd have been there for a few weeks and didn't have the budget.

The festival was usually run over four days, and then I would loosely programme because you know you could, after having viewed all these works, you can construct some loose themes, even really just for the sake of the audience because we knew then that audiences were fresh to this work. Some of the work was challenging. You would get complaints that, 'that was way too long,' so I would try to be kind to audience. If there was a long work, try and programme that with just a couple of short works, so there was lots of consideration given. That was quite successful. Along with that we programmed various events.

The 1994 festival was a great festival really, and I was first introduced to the Internet, which just seems so strange talking about it now like that but at the time we didn't know what it was. It was only used in academia. So, we had a group from London that included Simon Herbert. I think they were called Mongrel. They came up and did an introduction to browsers and the Internet. We had—I'm sure it was that festival as well—we had an Italian group, based in Germany, and I can't remember what they're called either. Malcolm would know.

MJ: Van Gogh TV?

AV: Yes, it was in the 1994 festival. This was partly funded by the Goethe-Institut. Marlies Pfeiffer helped us a lot back then with funding and support. That was a great event, just in terms of its novelty and the power behind the Internet that was new to everyone. My interest wasn't so much in new media. Artists were then beginning to work with the Internet, CD-

ROM and these new media. That was not so much my interest, I was still always, and still am, more focused on film and Super 8. 16mm, I love, but it's still really difficult to work with, there's no facilities for editing. Glasgow Film & Video Workshop had a Steinbeck for editing, I don't know what happened to that. Even with Super 8, I transferred it to video to edit. I didn't always, I did in the early days attempt to edit Super 8 but I was always pretty scared of losing—you know reversal film with no work print is so precious. So, really for ease, it was transferred to video.

The problem was always equipment back then, you know. I guess I didn't have money back then. We didn't get paid for New Visions, we did it as volunteers. It wasn't a job in itself although we did it full time. Money was short, it was a situation where we shared equipment. So, I borrowed, for my first film, I borrowed a camera. I did get a nice Super 8 Nizo in Amsterdam, so that lasted me a number of years. So, I did have my own Super 8 camera but you were always borrowing. Glasgow Film and Video Workshop, which is now GMAC, Media Access Centre, so, the Film and Video Workshop was the go-to place if you needed equipment but again you needed money to hire it. Quite often it was maybe an exchange of something. I sorted out the archive for the Film and Video Workshop in exchange for equipment once, it was basically just a room full of old U-Matic tapes and VHS and various formats.

I was always curious to know what was on all of this stuff. So, I offered to sort it out, I produced a wee catalogue, I labelled all the tapes so they could sit in a nice order and could be accessible by the public, and produced an archive catalogue. I don't know whatever happened to all of that work. It was great fun doing it and finding all these gems from the early days of the Film and Video Workshop because they ran a lot of community video projects. There was a lot of interesting stuff, social history on video, from like Poll Tax demonstrations, where they were out training on the video cameras. Camcorder Guerrillas took inspiration from that.

There were different strands: community video which I was really interested in as well, and the whole history of that. I was very interested in Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa, the way they worked collectively. There were a lot of collectives and film and video workshops dotted around the country. I think, at the time, in terms of a Scottish scene, we were trying our best: the workshop was there and New Visions in the same building and we made links with these groups through programming.

It was comforting to experience other film and video makers who weren't from the art school background, there was a kind of mix in Glasgow which was really interesting, at the time, people coming from the media course at Glasgow Uni. Pauline Law who was at the BBC, now an independent producer. Pauline was a director of the Film and Video Workshop at that time, she came from the Glasgow Uni Media course. There were a mix of backgrounds and knowledgeable technicians: artists like Paul Cameron, who ran the Castlemilk Video Workshop for a while; Jim Rusk was another great technician and camera man, particularly film Super 8 and 16mm, he was later involved in expanded cinema events at the art school.

Funding was difficult. The arts council were not on board at all, they didn't have any schemes. They didn't really recognise experimental film, they would tell you to go to Scottish Screen. 'It's not an art form, it's film.' For me, it was always as an artist that I was producing work. There was a divide then. The industry as such hadn't really developed in Scotland, so there was a clear divide between narrative film or drama and art film, and the various genres. I think it's a lot more crossed-over now and you've got documentary striding

the two. The film council didn't necessarily recognise experimental film and video either, so we were kind of stuck for funding as artists. There was a scheme, First Reels, you might have come across that. That was run by the film council. So, short films were being produced, this would have been early 1990s. Gillian Steel's *Chemicals and Illuminants* [1993] came through that scheme, Kevin Cameron's work also and possibly Louise Crawford's *Claiming Territory* [1993] and I'm sure Ewan Morrison too. I applied to that scheme myself but I didn't get funding.

It was always difficult to fund your work. It was when you could afford a Super 8 cartridge, but mainly I was focused not so much on producing then, but really as an observer and as a spectator and researcher, just really appreciating all the works that were coming in.

We developed monthly screening programmes as well, I think that was 1994 to 1996. So, we were always busy. We didn't always have big audiences but we had a regular—we knew who was interested and who would definitely be there. That was always an issue with the funders. Who, of course, have a different agenda. They have to justify their funds and all the rest of it, so they want audiences, they want as wide an audience as possible and all of these demands. That didn't interest me, it was really the works that interested me. I've ranted on a bit there.

MJ: That's a really great place to jump into. I've got a couple of questions about the timeline you've just given me. The first is just what was your postgraduate degree in?

AV: Fine Art, Drawing and Painting.

MJ: OK, so at that point, when you'd met Laura Hudson, how did experimental film and video come on to your radar in the first place?

AV: This is the difficulty that I have, I can't remember! I really can't. I mean it's quite a jump from painting. But, for me, now not really—I'm back painting and I'm still making film and video. There are links for me between the media. At the time, it was just this disillusionment with painting and not feeling that it was telling my story. I really don't know. I think going way back to my childhood, I've always loved film. I've always been really interested in film. I think I got that from my dad who would say, 'let's sit and watch this movie, this is fab movie.' You know, the old James Cagney movies and all of this. So, when I was reading film theory, I think it was more the politics probably, and the underground aspect of experimental film and its power as a tool for a feminist agenda. I prefer things that are hidden, that are sometimes anonymous, thinking here of the Maya Deren's statement about embracing 'amateurism,' doing something for the love of it rather than for commercial gain.

I'm not necessarily needing the names or the personality cults, but I'm interested in that moment when you're sitting in the cinema and something happens. So, those kinds of pregnant moments, I like. Particularly with experimental film, I love the colour, the flicker, that detournement that it does. It goes off on tangents, it disrupts narrative. I found all of that really inspiring but I had to have seen film and this is where I don't know where I first saw experimental work, I can't say. *EventSpace [1]* at the old Transmission on Chisholm Street was memorable and they would have been videos, and they were literally sitting in a pile with a monitor, so that's a different experience in itself.

I think it was really key to how I was thinking at the time, as a feminist, about feminist theory, about deconstructing femininity and femininity-as-masquerade. There was a lot of theory around these topics and I thought film and video were really something conducive to

having a closer look at that, rather than painting. I found painting really too unreal at the time, it wasn't serving a purpose for me. Again, I'm stuck with where I saw my first experimental film. It might have been on TV because we had Channel 4 in the early 1980s, *The Red Triangle*. Don't know if you know about that? That was late night programming of art house film started by Channel 4 in 1986. It was very late-night Friday nights, red triangle movies.

MJ: Is that the same thing as *The Eleventh Hour*?

AV: No, that came before *The Eleventh Hour*. These were more controversial. So, the red triangle was a warning sign if you like. It would be interesting to go back and to look at what they actually screened because I remember closely keeping an eye on that. It was maybe movies that had been censored. I'm sure there would have been experimental works in there. It may well have been television, which sounds unusual, but it might have been where I first viewed experimental work. Certainly, EventSpace and then the London Film-Makers' Co-op. I think I must have gone to the Co-op with the intention of seeing these programmes and particularly the *Die Kali-Filme* by Birgit Hein was a complete inspiration. I remember leaving, desperate to get home and really being clear about what I wanted to do with film.

MJ: Did you find the film institutions of Scotland, like the GFT, were they just not interested in this kind of stuff?

AV: Well the GFT was a New Visions venue and they were really on board. The projectionist was a laugh and loved doing New Visions because it was a novelty for him. You would sometimes hear him laughing in the projection box at some of the things he was watching. The GFT in itself, I don't recall any experimental programmes at that point. That was provided by New Visions every two years. That changed and you will regularly see programmes now, but normally from outside, either LUX or the Glasgow Film Festival. At that time, no the GFT were not programming experimental film or video or artists' video.

MJ: I'm wondering also, how stuff was coming onto your radar if we're pre-Internet proper, were there newsletters or circulars? How were you finding out about festivals in Europe and things like that?

AV: Through magazines. Must have been through magazines, periodicals, reviews. I read quite widely then. There would have been references to works. Remember this was the 1980s, so work from 1960s and 1970s was relatively recent, although it did not feel like it at the time! The Third Eye Centre, which is CCA now, was great at the time for back copies of various, lots of magazines, lots of books that were always lying around in the bookshop in boxes, going really cheaply. So, I got a lot of material there and it was really through reading that we were coming across stuff because you're right, there would have been no Internet. There was also *Variant* magazine which Malcolm was editing and that was a good source for experimental art forms, film and video. It would have been old catalogues. In the books that were available the Film-Makers' Co-op was always mentioned as the place to go to see what was happening.

MJ: Was it quite exclusive or was it something that was really easy to walk into?

AV: No, it was easy to walk into the Film-Makers' Co-op. In fact, nobody bothered, you could have been anybody walking in. It was very relaxed, really casual. It was an old dilapidated building. I was trying to remember where it was. It must have been Camden, pre-

Hoxton Square, it wouldn't have been the original building but I think it—it was the building that was used mainly for some time. I'm sure it was in Camden because it moved then. [...] The old building was fab, but it was run down but I like places like that. It was comfortable, people were friendly, it was very welcoming. There was a real buzz about it, you know.

I went to the *Super 8 is Dead* festival that Laura Hudson ran and it was just fab. Things were breaking down left, right and centre. I was trying to remember his name, but he was so funny, he was the host but he was also the projectionist and a filmmaker himself, one of the older filmmakers who had been around since the 1960s. He was comical when things were breaking down, it was just a great atmosphere. Fantastic. And you knew you were amongst people who were precious about their film and really appreciated the work. It was always really cool hanging out there. Things changed around quite often and then after Laura—there's a story there that you may know about, I don't know it too deeply but there was lots of disagreement at the merger between the London Film-Makers' Co-op and London Electronic Arts, which LUX arose from—all of that tension and conflict, which wasn't good. Laura Hudson would be able to tell you more about that.

MJ: [...] You said that New Visions was all voluntary so that leads me on to how you were all sustaining yourselves?

AV: We were all on the dole and it was possible then to live on benefits. Not now. I wonder about this myself because we were out regularly, we had a great social lives. When you're young you don't have the comfort needs. I'm fifty-five now and I like my comfort, I like to have things and when you're young, then you don't. I didn't need money. It was that kind of attitude. We live in very different times now, it really is drastically different for young people now, there is so much pressure on them. But myself, Malcolm and Paula Larkin, who organised the film festivals, we all worked together. Malcolm applied for all the funding and did the funding applications, occasionally we would get a one-off payment but not much, £50 here or there. Not enough to sustain us. So, there was the dole and that was the done thing then. Not now, at all, could you survive on that. That's the Government's intention. All of that work, over those three festivals, or the two festivals I worked on, was unpaid, really. It didn't make us any less committed for that. That work goes unrecognised in the end.

MJ: [...] Do you remember anything about when New Visions came to an end, when there was this merger of New Visions and the Fringe Film and Video Festival.

AV: Yes, I do, but I don't know that I would call it a merger.

MJ: Or, the almost-merger.

AV: Yes, that was a difficult time. Paula Larkin would be able to tell you more about that, she had more input in that consultation. I was really annoyed at the time because we felt that the rug was being pulled from under us. The Fringe were doing their thing which was similar to New Visions in Edinburgh. I couldn't see why we couldn't have two. The Fringe were around for longer than New Visions, actually, and was showing a lot of experimental work from its inception. [...] I kind of took a step back then and wasn't involved in that process because I was really annoyed that the arts council were coming in and saying, 'OK, we need a consultation here about the future of film and video in Scotland' when we were already an established organisation, had a track record, were working unpaid. I always found that the arts council were quite keen to be critical. Andrew Nairne was the director at the time and would often just come along willy-nilly and make comments about, 'that film is way too

long,' stupid comments like that. I always felt that we would be undermined and that's how I felt. We're still working but I took a step back, Paula and Malcolm were more involved in the consultation, Paula particularly would be able to tell you about that aspect and how that came about. It was a bit of a coup I think, from my point of view. We ended up with no festival, with New Media Scotland. So, even the title itself is a big shift. New Media Scotland were more focused on new media and those projects, again, experimental film and artists' film and video were left behind.

So, it had its day, if you like, and then there was nowhere to see that work. Malcolm went on to Street Level, so he continued that a bit and organised a Street Level events, can't remember the name of the festival—just a kind of conference, mini weekend festival. He continued that in his role. Paula and I remained with New Visions still registered as a company—I went back to making my own artwork and at that point I think it was becoming too difficult with no money, no funding, no recognition, I just moved away. That's when I started moving towards social work just as a job to fund the art practice.

MJ: When did you start doing that?

AV: Around [...] well, I was doing support work first. I eventually did go and do a master's in social work in 2012, but I needed a job, it became—for that while where it was possible to live on the dole, that became unsustainable. I went into care work, part time, and continued to make my artwork. I did get funding from the arts council. In 2005 they started a scheme, the Artists Film & Video Award.

They had a film and video funding scheme in the 1980s, Malcolm got one of those early grants and he made a video installation. Then they started it up again, the arts council, and I got one in the second year along with Matt Hulse and Henry Coombes. I think it only ran for a couple of years and they stopped it because they said nobody was applying, which I found very strange because there was a whole new batch of artists coming up then who were using video and it really had a new lease of life because it was already being shown in galleries and accepted in galleries.

Prior to 2006, even in the 1990s, there was video projection and the whole genre of performance to camera work that really came up with an energy. Different groups. There was a group around Leigh French who edited *Variant* magazine after Malcolm. Leigh and Beagles and Ramsay, they started a wee pub video group, so they would do screenings in The Griffin. There was always Café Flicker which I was involved with in start-up conversations but didn't really get involved in the running of it, I attended as an artist and showed work. Martha McCulloch who was formerly the director of Street Level before Malcolm, Martha took that on, along with video artist Shaz Kerr and then Inigo Garrido of Camcorder Guerrillas ran it for years. I believe Café Flicker is still running. That was a great thing where you could take your work along, unedited, rushes, and screen it and get other people's views. It was great because it was very open, people would say, 'how did you make that effect?' there were no secrets there, it was all shared, information about how to do this, or this new technology, or whatever. That was Café Flicker.

MJ: Do you remember when that started to change? You wrote a piece for *Variant* in 1997 that was about the change in direction of Café Flicker.

AV: Yes. I'd forgotten about that actually. That was Café Flicker and was I talking about a Canadian programme.

MJ: And also Beagles and Ramsay's Museum Magogo.

AV: Yes, Museum Magogo. That would have been probably after 1996, I think. When I just took a step back. I was still regularly going to screenings and being involved but I wasn't organising at that point.

Of course, Douglas Gordon and everybody were coming up. For me that was a definite shift. The so-called *Scotia Nostra* of Glasgow. Douglas and the environmental art brigade became known, simultaneous with YBA, London, and that put focus on Glasgow. That changed a lot. What I'm referring to is a movement that stems from the Glasgow European [City] of Culture 1990 events and promotions which the establishment seized upon to bring big money and business to the city. Culture was a great commodity and there was a media drive that manufactured a new image for Glasgow that fed into the Glasgow Miracle slogan.

Douglas showed his *24 Hour Psycho* at the Tramway and it was if video was suddenly big, but that's incorrect, video was a presence in the galleries prior to this work. Douglas Gordon already had a reputation but we were not seeing his work in Glasgow, so this was an event. I do recall he called New Visions to ask Malcolm how to slow down video! Video had been in the galleries prior to that, but from the Glasgow-scene point of view, that was a big shift to the kind of superstardom, if you like. Previously, we weren't interested in that and all that marketing and manufacturing of culture—see the Workers City Group.

A number of artists were involved as a counter movement to the drive to promote a manufactured culture. Also, the Chomsky conference [*Self-Determination and Power*, 1990] in Govan and Women in Profile were extremely important for me in terms of feminist practice and a major event that highlighted women's work. I exhibited a site-specific installation using photocopy art I made on Transmissions new colour copier, which was only single colours back then not full colour. Adele Patrick and Kate Henderson literally came around the studios at GSA seeking women artists to involve. Cathy Wilkes and Rachel Harris came together also then and were involved in Womanhouse project in Castlemilk. Should mention HERTAKE Festival at this point though I think organisers Laura Hudson and Louise Crawford wanted to remain independent of Women in Profile umbrella.

It was just a big marketing campaign and lots of people jumped on that bandwagon. I'm not being overly critical of those artists, that's what happens, we're artists, you want recognition, you want to be able to function as an artist, so you're dependent on that to an extent but there were other strands of practice like those just mentioned that remained local, that were coming from a critical perspective and I identified and aligned with that. But, there was never the infrastructure here in Scotland so a lot of those artists came up through the London art schools, a lot of them remained in Scotland but they were shifting around, moving around. There's no real gallery system here, there was never a developed private gallery system in Glasgow, other than the Compass and Cyril Gerber, which from our point of view, at the time, was focused on traditional painting, not interested in contemporary art and quite exclusive. There were very few opportunities.

MJ: Did that feel like quite a separate community? Even in a networking sense, would you be in the same places?

AV: We would be in the same places in the early days, the late 1980s, early 1990s. A regular haunt was the Mitre Bar, after Transmission openings or after any event, so we would all be in the same places. I mean I was on the Transmission committee with Anne Elliott, Billy

Clark, Euan Sutherland, Mike Ellen, Christine Borland, Dave Allen and Peter McKenzie but we kind of drifted in all directions. I was always more involved with Paula Larkin, Malcolm Dickson and Billy Clark who had links to various groups. The Free University, a follower of Here and Now collective, Keith Miller and the Glasgow anarchist groups, a lot of those artists and writers and poets, Jim Kelman, Tom Leonard, Alasdair Gray, Karen Thompson, Sandie Craigie, Jim Ferguson were meeting for readings at the Clutha Vaults and Scotia Bar. All of these people were concerned with working class culture. I was more drawn to that scene rather than the gallery, the visual art scene.

The Tramway was coming up then as well. So, there was a separation and in terms of the group that I associate myself with, the filmmakers from New Visions that I got to know all around that: Gillian Steel, Jane McNally, Paul and Kevin Cameron, Louise Crawford, Pictorial Heroes and Butler Brothers. They were not involved in the new group of video makers that came up through the art school, through the master's course, Museum Magogo, the pub screenings. Although, I was involved with Leigh French and *Variant* and Billy Clark—personally, I felt disconnected from that and was more of an observer than a participant but still with an active interest and a view to curating and programming. You had artists like Steph Smith and Eddie Stewart of Smith/Stewart who I studied with at Rijksakademie, Anne-Marie Copestake, [...] Hugh Watt, and various others, and people that I didn't then know. We weren't mixing so much socially and I kind of stopped going to art openings, I took a step back from the scene, if you like. I still had an eye on everything, I was still watching the work regularly at exhibitions but just wasn't at the openings.

There definitely was a kind of split there and that is very apparent in the *Running Time* show where you will see a massive gap between the late 1980s—you've got the artist that are included in the REWIND programme from Steve Partridge, his cohort if you like—and then after that there came Malcolm, Pictorial Heroes, myself, Louise Crawford, Gillian Steel, the Butler Brothers, the Cameron brothers—Paul and Kevin—and various other filmmakers at that time, and that whole chunk is missing. Then it starts kind of early 1990s, so that separation coincided really with video coming up in the gallery, Environmental Art crew becoming more well-known and everybody around the art school, and we were prior to all of that so somehow, we got missed.

Because we weren't involved, ourselves, in programming at that time, we were not a feature of the film and video network. It wasn't really a smooth transition, if you like. Sometimes I think, 'is this my perception?' but I do think that that media marketing drive really made a difference. A lot of us were like, 'ugh, OK, we don't want a part of this really.' The trade-off is that you're not included in exhibitions. A lot of people were really really annoyed at that claim that *Running Time* made and the omission of key people—Pictorial Heroes, Butler Brothers, Louise Crawford, Laura Hudson was absolutely shocking. I couldn't believe it.

I didn't know anything about it, and this is how out of it I was: it was Mandy McIntosh—who is a great film- and videomaker, she has been consistently on the scene and does her own thing, from New Visions days we showed some early work from her, her first films and videos—it was Mandy McIntosh who said to me, she said, 'have you seen the publicity for the big show in Edinburgh,' I didn't know anything about it, and she says, 'well, you're not in it, other people are not in it.' I went away home and googled it and was really annoyed. But, I went to the talk, the lecture, so the researcher, Francis McKee, Steve Partridge, and Matt Hulse were on the discussion panel—another great filmmaker, Matt made use of the Film and Video Workshop when he came down from Dundee. So, I went to that talk and it

just really wound me up to be honest. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art obviously didn't do their research thoroughly.

I think they were planning on speaking to Malcolm but they didn't, I think they missed the meeting and didn't make another meeting. It should have been picked up by Steve Partridge and really not sure why that happened, but, yeah. A big presentation like that, it has to be inclusive and you can't make claims like that when it is clearly not all-inclusive. I think, for what I was just saying earlier, it is a key group of artists—or that period of time—where people were producing that was missing, and it kind of links in with my argument about the marketing of the whole Environmental Art thing just took over and those few years, only a few years, the late 1980s, early 1990s, that period where the people who were practising then, were left out.

MJ: Yeah, I've definitely seen this criticism a few times. It's interesting. I wonder if we can delve more into that period then just to plot out some things that were happening, even just through you as an audience member. There are a few events that I really just know the name of and I really don't know anything else about them, but I wonder if you would recognise them. There's one event that Laura Hudson was involved with called HERTAKE, which was the international women's film festival, do you remember that?

AV: Yes, absolutely, that was fab. Thinking about this as well, do you have a date for HERTAKE?

MJ: 1990.

AV: Yes. So, it's strange that I was there because I was actually studying in Amsterdam for that time, so I must have come back for this. I was friends with Laura and Louise so would have been told about it. I'm sure I did, because I saw lots of films as well. HERTAKE was Laura Hudson, Louise Crawford, and there was somebody else, I've forgotten, they got together—it was presented under the umbrella of Women in Profile, so this was a big movement in Glasgow, across the arts. I think they wanted to be independent. Louise Crawford or Laura Hudson would be able to tell you more about that but, yes, I attended and saw lots of films there that were inspiring.

Again, from the London Film-Makers' Co-op, Moira Sweeney, an Irish filmmaker; Vivian Dick; a film called *Inside Upstairs* [1988] by Kathleen Maitland-Carter, she was a Canadian filmmaker who was based at the Co-op at the time. So, again, it was London coming up but that's what it was so that was great. That's all I really remember. I know they, Louise and Pauline Law I think, went to see Margaret Tait, at the time, to interview Margaret Tait, who was completely unknown then—well, not completely—but unrecognised, if you like, compared to how she is now. Nobody knew about her work, nobody showed her early short film work. [...] So, that was a key event, and I would say—that's one of your questions isn't it—I would say that was *the* event, for film and video.

MJ: Is there anything else around that time that you remember?

AV: So, we're talking 1990 and I was in Amsterdam then. Trying to think, before I went. No. No, really just New Visions when I came back from Amsterdam. There was Fotofeis which was Ken Gill—who is sadly dead now—Ken Gill came up from Newcastle, he was a founding member of the Basement Group and then Projects UK, an early 1980s video collective in Newcastle. Ken was an interesting video artist. So, Ken and Jackie Shearer who

went on to run Platform, Easterhouse, were organising Fotofeis and New Visions had curated some touring programmes for that, so that was an interesting project, but that was later. I don't know what year that was but that was later. Malcolm will have the documentation for that and he should still have all the tapes, hopefully. Still a lot of old video tapes lying around.

We really stupidly with New Visions—something I always regret—we put it in the festival rules that if your video was accepted, we would post it back to you, so you didn't have to include return postage, that was covered by the festival, which meant that we didn't then have a library of works. At that time, when you were sending stuff out to festivals you didn't really expect to get it back. You were always sending a copy, never your master, so you didn't really expect to get it back, but we ended up with all the films that hadn't been selected, the videos that weren't in the festival. So, instead of keeping the ones that were, and then we would have had a library of works that would have been really interesting, but of course we would have had right trouble getting funding to digitise them all. These are problems now, a lot of my own work I can't see, can't exhibit, because it's on older formats. I got around to digitising some of it but not all of it. That's something that is missing that we need.

MJ: It's the problem of media.

AV: I know! Ever changing formats.

MJ: That kind of relates to—I've written this in my notes as you were speaking—another question I had about when you mentioned that there started to be a branching out between new media and film and video, I wonder if you have any more reflections on that or a sense of when that was or how the networks were changing?

AV: That would have been about 1996, from then on. I don't know when this consultation was, that led to the formation of New Media Scotland, so it was around then. It was around those years that artists were beginning to use new media in different ways, for me, that was a big move from the experimental film days and it was more do with technology and the development of new technologies, though it was very much more linked to commerce and there was a burst of advertising video, all of that crossovers: artists shifting and moving into advertising agencies, that was a route for some film and video makers to go into commercial video houses, to earn money. So, there was a kind of flourishing in the commercial sector, I think, but no recognition of the artist, if you like, in that. So, the artist became more of personality, and more important than the work, if you like. For me, that's how it felt. That wasn't interesting for me.

Documentary started coming to the fore. We showed some experimental documentary which was kind of disrupting all the standard documentary traits. In the early 1990s, artists were working in an experimental way with documentary. There was a shift at that time and I think you can link that with the development of new technologies. Artists want to be at the forefront and to use new technologies, and that's fine, lots of interesting work coming out then, but for me, I was still focused with my wee Super 8 camera. You know, a machine's a machine isn't it, you can use tools in any way. There was never the support for the filmmaking, I think. There was this analogue versus digital divide, and digital was winning out at that time though analogue has since made its return: Luke Fowler and 16mm comeback. The new focus was on new media because it was probably easier—it was easier to show, it was easier to exhibit. It didn't have that—you know it had a new, kind of shiny feeling about it—it didn't have the grit and the grime of the Film-Makers' Co-op.

There was a whole shift away from that collective, cooperative movement linked to the radical left and organising structures of the 1960s and 1970s. Neoliberalism, for me, just floods everything and at that time, this was really evident, that things were being whipped up and marketed, and art was now entertainment. That crossover with the entertainment industries and the massive projectors, everybody was like, ‘we need these massive projectors and big flat screen TVs, monitors, and all the rest,’ which will cost you thousands of pounds to hire from Camerons and you still cannot get one today as an artist if you want to show your video in a shopfront. What do you do? There’s nowhere to get equipment. For New Visions we had to hire equipment, it was an utter nightmare every single year, getting all this stuff delivered from MITES, Liverpool, and costly. All of this would come up and you can imagine the technical difficulties, for a start having to transport it around Glasgow. I remember just carrying monitors in boxes, Paula and I, you know, across the city. It was just ridiculous because we had no car, nobody had a car. It was just silly.

There was nowhere to get this equipment in Glasgow. The Tramway was building up a bank and Malcolm was always talking to Tramway about getting something started like MITES in Liverpool: a pool of equipment that artists can use. Still to this day it’s a hassle, I showed a video last year, 2018, as part of the Architecture Fringe and I couldn’t access a monitor. I had to go and just buy a television. I just thought, ‘it’s thirty years later and still,’ I spoke to somebody at the CCA, I spoke to Malcolm at Street Level, but they have nothing and he wasn’t able to point me in any direction. I thought instead of paying money to hire it, I may as well just buy a monitor.

MJ: I wonder, kind of related to that although maybe more about distribution than exhibition, but how have you circulated your work throughout your career?

AV: I haven’t! I’m really bad at that. I used to do festivals, not really now. I’m really poor at focusing on deadlines and working towards deadlines but I’ve done enough that is dotted around here and there. Laura picked up some work for the Film-Makers’ Co-op although it was never—it didn’t then transfer to LUX, so I’m not sure what happened there. That was a 16mm film, so she showed that as part of a programme at the Whitechapel Gallery. Various festivals here and there, I’ve been involved in. I don’t really do festivals. I did Alchemy festival a couple of years ago, three years ago and the work that was funded through the arts council film and video scheme, that automatically went into the Scottish Screen Archive which is now the National Library at Kelvin Hall. Because it was part of that funding scheme, that was joint between Scottish Screen and the arts council, it automatically went into that archive.

Louise Crawford and myself spoke to Scottish Screen a number of years ago about developing the archive and housing some masters there from that period, the late 1980s, the period that we are familiar with. But, their remit is that it has to have something to do with Scotland, it has to be Scottish in some way, that was just too absurd—how could we fit all this, all these works? The works had to be about Scotland I think at the time, I don’t know if they have changed that. If you’ve been to the archive you’ll see all the old archive films of Scotland, here and there, back in the day.

MJ: It’s very social history oriented.

AV: Yes, it’s a different thing. We did approach them to say, ‘can we?’ This was prior to LUX coming to Scotland which was kind of inevitable, we knew that was going to happen. But, it was always our purpose at New Visions to distribute, to do, more or less, what LUX is

doing in Scotland: to develop a bank of work and a distribution network. But, that didn't happen, they weren't prepared to fund that at the time of our consultation in 1996.

MJ: Were you included in any of these video packages like *Made in Scotland*, were you in that?

AV: No. They were all before myself, they were more around the time, early 1980s, mid-1980s, around the Steve Partridge time. I think that was probably—in fact, that was before. No, you know Malcolm might have been involved in that, I think he was in Dundee at the time studying there to do the postgraduate. [...] That would have been before the time that I was practising.

MJ: I guess, one of the things I'm interested in is nationhood and how that works and operates in work that's made here. I wonder if there's anything you'd have to say or reflect on in relation to that and whether you think there's anything Scottish about the work people make here?

AV: It's a funny one, that. It's always one that people shy away from, 'no, no, I'm not.' There's lots of mixed arguments there about nationhood and Scottishness. I can't see that it is *but*—I think then, you're getting into dodgy territory where you have to identify, well what is Scottishness in film and video? Is it the landscape? Is it the social, political belief? Is it the politics? So, what makes a film Scottish or not? You know, it can be limiting but if you want a boundary or if that is your aim as an artist, to explore this, then that is absolutely fine. But the work that I was inspired by was varied, it wasn't—I couldn't identify national traits but I could say, for example, the Austrian company Sixpack was extremely organised and well-funded, therefore the works that they distributed had a certain quality, a certain approach that was reflected in that history. Whether that makes them Austrian? It's a difficult one.

For myself, there is something but it's not common so I don't think you can identify it as a Scottish trait, but there is something in the language, something in the culture, in the landscape, and these—I think—these things crop up and they come back, they recur. In some of my own work, it's personal, it's about the artist's influences and your own experience. Because it's a very different experience growing up in Scotland, working class politics are very important to me. In Glasgow, in a marginalised colony of the UK—there are a lot of politics around that—than it is in the London inner city. We have different connections, it's there in the literature, in Hugh MacDiarmid through to Tom Leonard, and the writing of Jim Kelman, that's all important. Margaret Tait herself, making local film, so for me the local is very interesting.

Neoliberalism brought with it globalisation and suddenly the focus shifts and you're like—this is where I find myself now—where are we now? There seems to be a lack of focus, we are all over the place, one minute we're in one of the States, then we're in another and then we're in London and then we've got a stabbing in Glasgow, it's all very difficult to make sense of but there is, politically, the history is extremely important, to look back and see where all of this has come from: what was in place in Scotland and why was Margaret Tait not accepted? Why did that happen? Why was she not accepted here? That's not addressed. Instead we have a celebration, but what was missing at the time? Because, clearly, she was not appreciated then as she is now. But she just got on with it, she just continued to make her work and she had relationships with her film lab in England and her own distribution, so did it matter so much to her that she was in Scotland or that she was making films about Scottish

life sometimes? Some of these things, the poetics in her films, are universal. She had links anyway with the Italian New Wave.

I'm rambling a bit here but it's always a hard one that. I think your own sensibilities are developed through your experience and your experience of a place, I feel very grounded in Scotland, and particularly in Glasgow. I lived in Edinburgh for a while when I was doing my master's in social work and I felt like I was on holiday. I travelled a bit as an agency social worker, around the Borders and Fife, which was great but Glasgow, this is where the roots are. There is for me a sense of national pride that is related to working class history, linked to an understanding of oppression which does not have national boundaries—that is going to come out in your work, that is going to translate in your work somehow. But, if you can package it or define what these traits are? You can try, there are interesting discourses around that.

MJ: I guess relating to that, I wonder if you think there's anything—maybe going from the content of work and like the concept of work—to the way that work is presented or moves in Scotland. Do you think there's anything that differentiates this place from other places?

AV: I don't know, that's quite difficult because I don't know how everyone else does it. I can't imagine how it is to practice in London because even Glasgow itself, there are a flood of artists, there are just so many artists, how do you exhibit your work if you're not known and if you're outside of those, well it's LUX really, and if you're not organising yourself, you're not networking? There's very little in terms of open submission here. To compare to the rest of the UK, I don't know, I don't know how to answer that. But certainly, Scotland is small enough, it's ideal for touring programmes, still. There are established venues. It wouldn't be difficult to tour a history. There is an interest now

MJ: Just off the back of that last point you made, I'll maybe ask just one more question if that's OK, and that is: what would the moving image in Scotland need to be more sustainable or to be enhanced in some way?

AV: It would be fab to have a database, it would be fab to have a dedicated space really, where works could be digitised, where we can create an archive and distribution, a database where there is a bank of equipment for lending, for hiring. I don't know how film and video artists now, who are coming out, produce their work. I might be missing something. I haven't been in touch with Glasgow Media Access Centre for a number of years, so I don't know how they're working but I think they did move more towards industry so I don't know if artists now are using that space. Where they get equipment now, the art school? So, that hasn't really changed.

I don't know what people are doing now but certainly for me it has become a lot more introverted, you edit in your home: you've got software, you've got your own camera, you've got all of your own equipment now, so you're not getting the opportunity to mix and to see other points of view and to talk about work. There are occasionally screenings or the odd conference, there are events, the Arika festival—I always attended that festival—for exhibition. But, what we really need is a committed distribution. LUX does its thing but you can't submit your work to LUX, they're not interested. I did speak to them when they first came to Glasgow, spoke to Mason and always meant to meet up with them to talk about it but never got around to it, and just didn't have the time to follow these things up.

I think it would be great to have a dedicated space and certainly access to digitisation. Not everybody needs that access you know, most people are working digitally now, it's just the old artists who need to have their work digitised. And, certainly a library, a physical space where you can go and view works, or browse if it were an online library. But, for me personally, I like the physical space, I find it difficult using the computer other than through the week with my job because I have no choice! I tend not to be on it. I really struggle to edit now because I just dread sitting on this computer, that's really difficult for me. I'm painting now and getting my hands dirty and using more organic materials—so I'm taking a step back from all of that media but certainly a space would be great, I think. Everybody does everything online and I think a space would be fantastic, you know, that you could meet up in and have a coffee and meet other people physically. I do still enjoy going to the festivals and the weekends, the Artists' Moving Image Festival, or whatever. I'm a bit out of touch with other artists, the younger artists and most people my age don't bother to go—that would be nice and I would like that. It would make a real difference.

MJ: Great, that's super. That's a really lovely and optimistic answer and it's nice to think about what could happen.

AV: Yes, we live and dream!