

## **VIDEO + VIDEO/FILM some possibilities suggested by some experience**

An unedited facsimile Paper version of a Poster made and delivered in June 1973 at the Experimental and Avant-Garde Film Festival, National Film Theatre, London. Reconstructed, with an Introduction, in June 2005.

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### **Time-based Media, the New, and Practice-based Research**

The Poster, 'Video + Video/Film – Some Possibilities Suggested by Some Experience,' emerged from several converging circumstances. It followed a period between 1971 and 1972 of working quite intensively with the first generation of 'industrial' video cameras, monitors and spool-to-spool recorders. My background working with photography and 16mm film, both as a film-maker artist and as a film editor and cameraman in the television and film industries, softened my entry to working with this technology. I was a part-time lecturer at various colleges of art so had access to these low bandwidth video facilities. Teaching institutions, if not individuals, could well afford to purchase low-band video at this point as it had low running costs as well as good pedagogical prospects.

In conjunction with some students and staff, I found the new apparatus encouraged a looser and more immediate response to, in the context of contemporary art practice, working with a time-based medium. Essentially it shortened the action and response time inherent in the creative practice of film-making for instance, restoring immediacy, encouraging spontaneity and enabling evaluation and analysis to operate within a critical framework of the active present.

Experiments were conducted that heightened these fresh qualities, pursuing the many avenues and opportunities suggested by the varied ways in which sound but more particularly image could be gathered and manipulated. The simple ability to gather an image extending over a long time span, or the complex mixing of images from different sources – either activity using film would be expensive and have to 'work' first time – were crucial differences first noticed. So the element of feedback and control and reproducibility that lead to performance and installation forms were some of the early outcomes established for the new media of the day.

For the most part, artworks on videotape or as close-circuit installations were presented in a gallery setting on video monitors – video projectors were a good decade away – and catalogue notes when they were available, rarely addressed the practice-base from where most of the work emerged. Quite often the 'subject' of a video piece might address the paradoxes of the video image, particularly in relation to its broadcast television form, but the 'material' or the substance of the representational apparatus was not the subject of reflection.

In the course of working with art students and collaborating with other visual artists during this period, I began noting the processes of understanding and identifying the specificity of the video medium, the options that were taken during the development of a work, the interweaving of the plasticity of this time-based image with the looping decision-making processes that occur before a final sequence was committed as completed to videotape.

Collaborative exploration of this new practice emerged from a convergence of interest between fellow artists and the students many of them taught. The Poster records six areas of collaboration, a practice not very familiar to artists used to working as individuals across a variety of media and artforms. The Poster is also the only remaining evidence of many of the video projects undertaken. This was the era of the immaterial in art and the elevation of the ephemeral was echoed by the ease with which videotape could be erased – not always intentionally – and re-used: some projects were simply grist for the next. Taken together with the Achille's Heel in the area of electronics-based technology - obsolescence - and the many tapes made but not migrated promptly, gives the Poster added significance.\*

The final stage of convergence for the production of the Poster in 1973 was when a lecturer in the Printing department of one of the colleges volunteered his presses for whatever large scale printing I might need. This affordance finalised the reflective practice, drawing together the various notes and diagrams that had been accumulating on paper and in mind, into the Poster form, a familiar mode of presentation at science and technology events, but unknown in the art world. It is another instance of the distinct attitudes to experience generation and knowledge management that remain separated within our Western culture.

Mike Leggett, June 2005

\* Item 6, the 'videographic experiment; Tender Kisses' became a 16mm film in colour distributed by the London Film-makers Co-op (now Lux), before migrating to U-matic tape and more recently, DVD.