

2, 19th April - 16th June 1971: MOVING WALLPAPER IN THE TELEVISION LOUNGE - For this eight week period students of the Somerset College of Art together with two part-time lecturers, Mike Leggett and Ian Breakwell, investigated the phenomena of television and put their results into a thirty minute video tape produced in the video studio of the Plymouth College of Art.

A statement was issued as an initial step: "Study and observe the piece of equipment known as a television set in its most common environment the living-room, the lounge, the drawing room, whatever you may call it, the room where the members of the household find themselves after working, after eating, before they go to bed.....

The television though it remains a consumer article is no longer, as it used to be, a consumer gadget. It could be more accurately described as just another consumer ornament. Previously an ornament would have been a lamp standard, a vase, some wallpaper, a picture, a set of china ducks, a picture window, a coffee table, a bookcase, a pot plant....the television cabinet when not functioning as a source of images and sound certainly remains just one of these but even when the object is producing images and sounds, does this necessarily change its role as an ornament?

Functioning perfectly, is it not simply a 21" picture window? Another standard lamp in the corner? A constantly changing pattern of new wallpaper? (In the TV industry a generic term applied to visuals which do little but occupy screen time whilst the 'message' is carried by commentary is "moving wallpaper"). An engaging guest who's staying permanently, who's impossible to ignore and who won't tolerate being turned off'.

Additionally, the BBC in Bristol were approached and the Regional Television Manager told about the proposed project which at the time was still waiting for approval from the college authorities. Since the project involved television and the people involved lived and worked in the West Region transmission area, would the BBC be interested in co-operating by having the participants visit and meet the 'professional programme makers' and possibly contribute ideas and material to the regional opt-out programme series shortly to start which could have only a small budget and would need any local talent going? Yes, he thought all this was an idea and that we should stay in touch and let him have written suggestions as soon as possible.

The project got under way; written and visual information from every conceivable source appeared. Though there were only twelve full-time students working four days a week, the rest of the students began to use the painting studio allocated and transformed it into something between a second-hand TV shop and common room and a design workshop in an efficient film studio. There would be a television showing the news being read through a two-inch square paper mask and next to it a cathode ray tube being removed from its cabinet to make way for its conversion into a fish aquarium.