

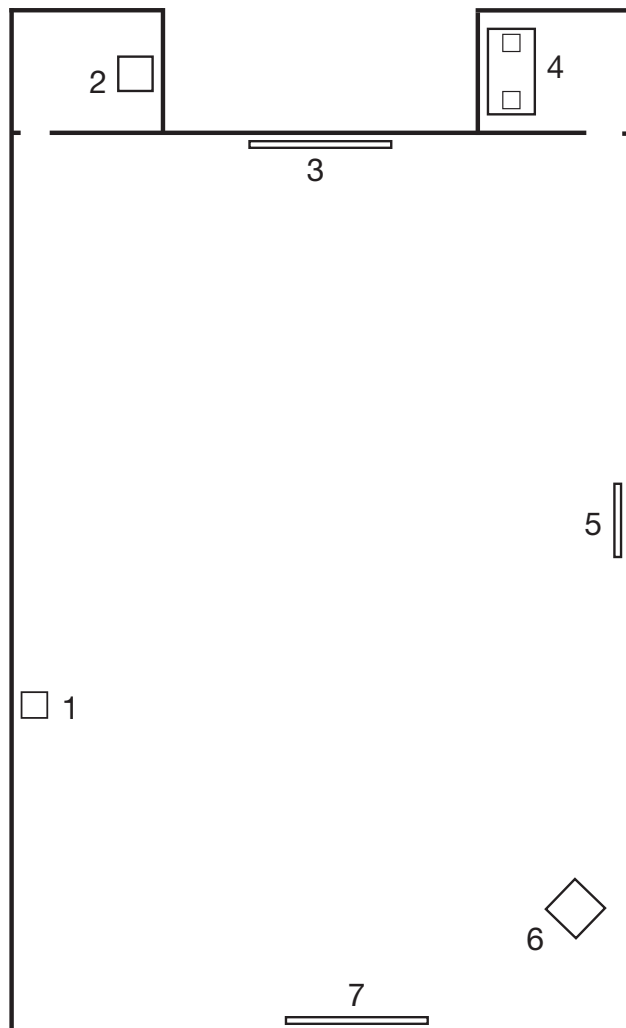
REWIND: British Artists' Video in the 1970s and 1980s

24 November - 1 December 2012

Gallery 2

This exhibition celebrates the publication of *REWIND - British Artists' Video in the 1970s and 1980s*, a new book celebrating the first two decades of artists' works in video. The exhibition presents key works from the REWIND Artists' Video Collection in a short-run exhibition that allows visitors to view the works and to browse this important new book.

REWIND is a research project at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, led by Prof. Stephen Partridge and funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council. The project investigates and conserves works from the first two decades of artists' video. Further access to the REWIND Artists' Video Collection is available by appointment at the Visual Research Centre which is located on the lower floors of DCA. The book, published by John Libbey, is available to purchase in DCA Shop.



Gallery 2

Works in the exhibition

1. **Stephen Partridge**
Easy Piece, 1974, 30min
2. **David Hall**
Stooky Bill TV, 1990, 4min
3. **David Larcher**
videøvoid, 1993, 32min 12sec
4. **Kevin Atherton**
Television Interview, 1984, 26min
5. **David Critchley**
Pieces I Never Did (3 Screen Composite), 1979/2012, 31min 20sec
6. **Elaine Shemilt**
Doppelgänger, 1979-81, 9min 11sec
7. **Tina Keane**
Bedtime Story, 1982, 16min
Faded Wallpaper, 1988, 19min

DCA

Dundee Contemporary Arts

About the Artists

Stephen Partridge

Born 1953

Easy Piece, 1974, 30min

“Easy Piece is a very minimal structuralist work which confronts the spectators’ expectations of visual information. The screen is blank for most of the time but is interrupted at precise intervals by the image of the word ‘easy’, which is heard spoken in a rather sensuous tone. After a few minutes the word is expected and awaited even though its ambiguity becomes irritating and meaningless, contrary to its definition... The placement of the work within the gallery space further accentuates its sculptural character, making us realise that Easy Piece isn’t to be mistaken for a TV programme, but is to be approached as a new kind of artistic experience, one which lies somewhere between film, television, painting and sculpture.” - John Calcutt, *Stephen Partridge Inaugural Exhibition Catalogue*, Cooper Gallery DJCAD, 1999

David Hall

Born 1937

Stooky Bill TV, 1990, 4min

“John Logie Baird invented television. He had worked in isolation for two years, partly because he could afford no help, and partly because he was terrified that his invention would be stolen. His only assistant was a ventriloquist’s dummy called Stooky Bill. Bill spent many hours under the intense light in front of various machines which were built from the cheapest materials. Massive cardboard discs embedded with spirals of glued lenses were spun to the point of destruction - glass spraying all over the room. Thousands of volts of electricity were generated through coupling hundreds of batteries - electrocution was a distinct possibility. It was a very dangerous time for both of them. Then suddenly, one day in early October 1925, success. Baird transmitted the first ever recognisable TV image across his attic room. The image was of Stooky Bill. It was a great day for both of them....John Logie Baird, father of the most powerful medium ever, never received proper acclaim. Stooky Bill has avenged him ever since. TV belongs to Stooky Bill. The opaque. The transparent. The machine. The screen. The Fact as Fiction. Fiction as Fact. First TV, first Interruption, first illusion. Dummy illusion, double illusion, the grand illusion. Dummy TV.” - David Hall, *19490 TV Interventions Catalogue*, 1990

David Larcher

Born 1942

videavoid, 1993, 32min 12sec

David Larcher “translates the electronic model of processing into computer graphics where the generic development of video dissolves into the abstraction of noise: video void. This marks a shift from recognizable information into the basic elements of iconic display in the digital.” - Yvonne Spielmann, *REWIND British Artists’ Video in the 1970s & 1980s* - Sean Cubitt & Stephen Partridge, 2012

“From the trace reproduced by a single drop out is created a series of digital landscapes that provide the backgrounds for the flight of the Zenonian arrow towards void. The absence of information in a drop-out creates the space which defines a coincidental arrow on collision course with the proverbial flying equation... asymptote signifying nothing. The central, interfaces the French word vide with the English void... these meet in the real world of the river Vidus as it flows through Void the town. The tape is spun off the top of a monopole and folded into cypher space; a simulation referenced to the occasional Elysian field magnet as it tries to attract that electron you’re not seeing before it gets to the hypothetical target of your mind... reflection of it’s virtuality rather than anything real.” - David Larcher, *European Media Art Festival Catalogue*, 1994

Kevin Atherton

Born 1950

Television Interview, 1984, 26min

“KA: It’s funny, yes, but in fact it’s a serious comment on the relationship between video art and broadcast television in the early nineteen eighties. It’s just that in using so-called ‘high culture’ to examine ‘low culture’ I would prefer for the work itself to more closely follow the form of the lower end rather than the higher. That way if the work is entertaining, as is the case with this piece, you take the audience with you, rather than have them walk away because the work comes across as didactic.

KA: But aren’t you just poking fun at the two-dimensional characters that make up Coronation Street, for example, when you ask the hapless Emily Bishop, ‘Have you ever heard of video art?’ and she replies, ‘Yes, I think I’ve heard of it, I’m not sure’.

KA: No, I’m not taking the piss out of the cast of Coronation Street, it’s a programme that I’ve followed all my life. I remember watching it as a kid, very soon after it first started on ITV. If you compare the Emily Bishop line with the line to Kevin Webster’s father where I say to him ‘Anyway, you’re just an image on a TV screen’ and he replies ‘Yes I am, and I don’t mind admitting it’, then I am clearly allowing the character to express his knowledge of his own ontological condition. In fact, I give him the upper hand when I reply that ‘I’m not’ (an image on a TV screen), that I’m real, and Kevin’s Dad replies: ‘Give over’.”

- Excerpt from Kevin Atherton *Auto-Interview* published by Flood, Dublin 2012

David Critchley

Born 1953

Pieces I Never Did (3 Screen Composite), 1979/2012, 31min 20sec

“Pieces I Never Did was made as my attempt at a ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’, drawing on all the elements of differing forms that I could muster. This was not simply a summation or record of all I had done before but rather a working together of disparate elements into a coherent complex whole. My intention was to push the boundaries of video art at that time: to push my own physical, intellectual and moral boundaries, and to negate the whole endeavor by sowing the seeds of the work’s own destruction from the outset. The resulting three channel, eighteen part, 31 minute piece both celebrated and denigrated my own history, my peer group and my alma mater. In 1984, along with all of my other films, photographs, recordings and works on paper, I did actually destroy all the master material, edits and copies in my possession – left in a black bin liner in Tisbury Court, Soho. Copies of the single screen version, (made for practicality after the three channel version), survived in the collections of several colleges and galleries. It was from these that I have been enabled by the REWIND project to make a complex reverse-edit procedure with Adam Lockhart and create what is essentially a restoration of the three-channel piece.” - David Critchley, *REWIND + PLAY*, DVD Sleeve Notes, published by LUX, 2009

Elaine Shemilt

Born 1959

Doppelgänger, 1979-81, 9min 11sec

“Doppelgänger has its origins in 19th century German, literally ‘double-goer’, and means ‘an apparition or a double of a living person’. The core concept of the video - the exploration of the identity, is a key theme, like many video art pieces at the time. Identity as personality, as gender, as a psychological entity, as the body and as the artist... The piece begins with a close up of the face of the artist, her eyes face the camera directly, without hesitation, then we see her approaching a mirror and sit in front of it, with her back to the camera, dressed in denim overalls and a T-shirt.

From the reflection in the mirror we see her putting make up on her face with very dry, precise gestures... Occasionally, the performance is interrupted by another image - the face of the artist, beautifully dressed, with her hair combed and make up on. This frozen portrait begins to move slightly, creating multiple images of her face. The piece returns to the mirror scene and the make up the artist has put on too much make up, her face has become a mask with an effect that is similar to theatre make up. She then drops the concealer and takes a dark pen, taking the role of a painter, she begins to draw on the mirror. The artist eventually shapes a sort of double of herself following the traces and borders of her real image reflected. This situation evokes the myth of Narcissus. The reflected image of the artist is manipulated by her drawing, creating a phantasmic double - the doppelgänger. This doppelgänger seems to become part of herself. She continues to work on the image moving her face and mimicking the gestures when you put lipstick on, continuing to look into to the mirror... Finally we return to the mirror scene, the artist has gone, and the doppelgänger has taken her place.”
- Laura Leuzzi, 2012

Tina Keane

Born 1948

Bedtime Story, 1982, 16min

“Tina Keane takes the tale of ‘Bluebeard’ - in which women who are curious come to a ghastly end - and juxtaposes it with a feminist text about female sexuality. *Bedtime Story* questions how attitudes are often placed in our subconscious minds at an early age through ‘children’s stories’. The voice-over texts and the evocative ambiguity of the imagery work together to explore the veiled meaning and rigid stereotyping which underlie the ‘Bluebeard’ tale, and shows a woman becoming aware of the oppression and exploitation of other women.” - Tina Keane, *Cinenova* Catalogue, www.cinenova.org

Faded Wallpaper, 1988, 19min

“Based loosely on the short story by Charlotte Perkins Gilman ‘Faded Wallpaper’ is concerned with visual perception, madness and the search for identity. A woman, isolated within a room, becomes obsessed with the wallpaper surrounding her, seeing within it’s faded patterns strange images – at times pleasurable and seductive, at times threatening and dangerous. As these images become more insistent she begins to strip the wallpaper away in an attempt either to banish the images or get to their source. Words and sounds run through her head as she peels away the layers, questioning her own self-image, her imagination and her sanity. No solutions are given, only more questions...”

- Tina Keane, press release for the Tate Gallery Patrons of the New Art performance installation

Faded Wallpaper, 1988