

DAVID HALL: SITUATIONS ENVISAGED

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David Hall, known as the “Godfather of British video art”, was an innovative artist and filmmaker renowned for revolutionising the promotion and reception of video art. He famously made the first ever artistic intervention on British television with his ten ‘Interruptions’ of 1971: broadcast on Scottish television, the interruptions were both unannounced and uncredited. Now known as 7 *TV Pieces* (Collection Tate, UK and Reina Sofia, Spain) the ‘Interruptions’ opened the gateway for further technical and artistic experiments within the medium of television, video and film including *60 TV Sets*: the first ever multi-channel video installation, shown in 1972 at the Goethe Institute, London.

This exhibition takes as its nexus the ground-breaking installation, *A Situation Envisaged: The Rite II (Cultural Eclipse)* (1989) – a fifteen monitor video installation, first commissioned and exhibited for *Video Positive ’89* at Tate Liverpool.

Renowned curator Chrissie Isles described *A Situation Envisaged* as: “*striking in its prescient re-interpretation of both the Minimalist sculpture of the 1960s, of which Hall was a part, and the post-Minimalist artistic hybridity of the 1970s, which he helped to create*”.

Hall’s early career and practice was founded in minimalism; his sculptures were included in the seminal 1966 exhibition *Primary Structures*, curated by Kynaston McShine at the Jewish Museum, New York. The geometric structure of *A Situation Envisaged* asserts these minimal beginnings, whilst the centre monitor, with its image of the moon, recalls Nam June Paik’s assertion that the moon was ‘the oldest TV’ – a nod to the “father of video art” and his enduring influence on Hall.

Screened alongside this important installation is *Cinema* (1972–3), a series of five films made with Tony Sinden: *Actor, Between, Edge, This Surface* and *View*, which were first exhibited at Tate in 1974. The five films explore the very materiality of the screen against the projected image through a manipulation of classic tropes and techniques of film.

Hall’s interest in the intrinsic properties of film as a medium is further explored with two single-channel video works: *TV Fighter (Cam Era Plane)* (1977) – described by Michael O’Pray of the BFI as “an astonishing *tour de force*” – and *Vidicon Inscriptions: The Tape* (1973) – first exhibited at *Dokumenta 6*, 1977. *TV Fighter* explores the concept of time, juxtaposing historical footage against his own. *Vidicon Inscriptions* literally registers the passage of time through the periodic release of a polaroid shutter, each fixed image then burnt into the “vidicon” tube. These films are unparalleled in their unique and experimental approach to the medium of video.

The exhibition will include archival documentation, drawings, and vintage photographs from the estate of David Hall.

David Hall (b. Leicestershire, 1937 – d. Kent, 2014)

A student of architecture, art and design at Leicester College of Art (1954–60) and sculpture at the Royal College of Art (1960–1964), David Hall went on to teach sculpture at Kingston University, London, and later St Martins School of Art, London. He very quickly became part of the challenge to the dominant object-based culture extant during the 1960s and was a founding member and contributor to the video art movement.

Hall became progressively illusionistic after graduating from the RCA and, by 1968 he was making sculptures that only existed for the camera – either as photographs or films. He made his last ever sculpture, *Displacement (Removal Piece)* for the ICA’s 1970 exhibition *British Sculpture Out of the Sixties*. The sculpture consisted of a carefully delineated shape on the painted floor: the shape corresponding to a sculpture by Hall on display in Japan at the time, the sculpture’s absent form indicated by the paint being sanded away.

Hall was the first practicing artist to be awarded funding by the Arts Council of Great Britain for a series of films, including *Motion Parallax* (1968) and *Vertical* (1969), both of which explored space in the landscape. He was co-curator of the first video-installation exhibition at the Tate Gallery, London 1976; co-founder of London Video Arts (now LUX), 1976; a member of the Artist Placement Group (formed 1966); and founder of the first time-based media course at Maidstone College of Art in 1972. Awarded first prize at the *Biennale de Paris* in 1965, Hall took part in other key shows including: *Primary Structures*, Jewish Museum, New York, 1966; a solo show at Tate Gallery, 1974; the seminal international *Video Show* exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery, London in 1975, of which he was also co-organizer, and more recently bringing to a dramatic conclusion the switch from analog to digital broadcast transmissions with *1001 TV Sets (End Piece)* (1972–2012) at Ambika P3, London. Hall succeeded in making video art an autonomous art form and bringing to the forefront the notion of “time-based media”.

The exhibition is curated by Stephen Partridge in consultation with Hall’s daughter Debi Hall, Caroline Irving, Anna Ridley, and Adam Lockhart. Partridge is an artist and academic researcher (Dundee University) whose recent video-art archival and historical projects include REWIND & RewindItalia. His early video work *Monitor* (1974) was recently acquired by Tate.

Richard Saltoun Gallery and the Estate of David Hall would like to thank LUX, London, and REWIND, Dundee.

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David Hall

Situations Envisaged

17 July – 14 August 2015

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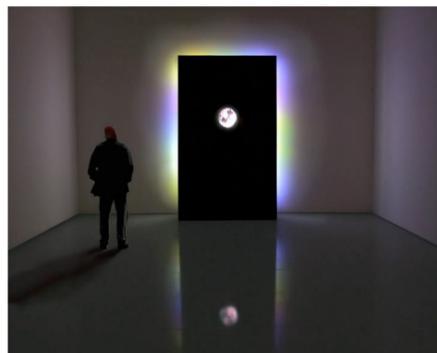
Vidicon Inscriptions: The Tape, 1973
Single screen black & white video, with sound
Duration: 6 mins
(DHA005)

This work captures the video's capacity for real-time image-making through the use of ghostly traces of light, which are burnt into the tube's photoconductive signal plate.



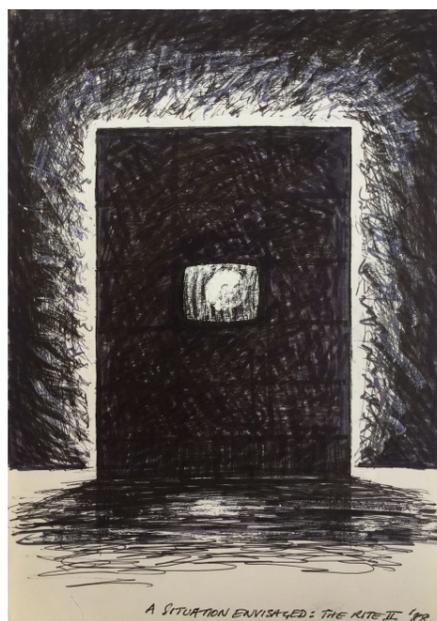
TV Fighter (Cam Era Plane), 1977
Single screen black & white video, with sound
Duration: 10 mins
(DHA004)

"In this work, Hall plays with the experiences of real-time and the video copy, presenting in several iterations a fragment of World War II footage taken from the point of view of a fighter plane as it machine-guns targets on land and sea. Using a Russian-doll structure of images repeatedly rerecorded and reframed, Hall toys with the viewer's manifold experiences of live and recorded time: the historical time of archival footage, the live experience of watching it on a screen, the déjà vu of watching that 'live' footage again on another monitor. This nesting of recorded images within other recorded images implies an emergent sensibility in which the present moment is continually being recorded and reframed by audiovisual apparatus." Leo Goldsmith, Artforum, January 2015.



A Situation Envisaged: The Rite II (Cultural Eclipse), 1989
Fifteen monitor video installation, with sound
287 × 179 × 51 cm approx. (installation)
(DHA002)

This work is the third from the *Situation Envisaged* series (started in 1978), made for *Video Positive '89*, held at the Tate Gallery, Liverpool (1989). 15 monitors are stacked as a single block close to a wall. TV broadcasts reflected on the wall form an aura of changing light. In the centre, on the only screen to be seen, is a 30 line image of the moon shot on a 'camera'/ scanner identical to that first used by John Logie Baird in the 1920s. The sound (by David Cunningham) is derived from multiple broadcast channels and composed as a musical score.



A Situation Envisaged: The Rite II, 1988
Pencil, pen, felt-tip pen and correction fluid on paper
30 × 21 cm
(DHA010)



Cinema (working title), 1972/73
A series of five films made in collaboration with the late Tony Sinden. All single screen colour 16 mm with optical sound.
"Actor" 11 mins | "Between" 17 mins | "Edge" 10 mins | "This Surface" 11 mins | "View" 10 mins
(DHA003)

Actor

An actor, deliberately "acting", converses by telephone with an unseen and unheard person. His monologue attempts to draw the audience across the time barrier between the shooting of the film and its viewing, gradually implying that it is the audience with whom he is conversing.

Between

This film attempts to unite the process of filming and viewing. The camera moves through the theatre space, re-filming the projected beam and its reflection, whilst the viewer – stationary – becomes aware of the physical space of the theatre as defined by the beam of light. Successive generations of printing of this basic image leads to disintegration and a re-flattening of the initial sense of deep space.

Edge

A "western" in which the classic situation of an impending gunfight is transformed from that conventional confrontation into a confrontation with audience expectation as camera action begins to predominate. The frustration of expectation redirects audience attention to the fundamental significance of composition.

This Surface

This film purposefully utilizes a traditionally seductive theatrical image at the outset which is subsequently redefined in the concrete terms of projection and screen. A man is seen dancing in a pub with a pint of beer on his head. This is followed by a series of long traveling shots along Brighton seafront filmed from a moving train. The imagery and illusion of spatial depth are thus challenged in alternative terms which identify the events as a series of projected images on the physical surface of the screen.

View

This single-take film, using a fixed camera, explores a shift in perception from the screen surface as a physical area to the illusion of three dimensions in a filmed image. A partial view of a room is slowly revealed, and hints of colour are introduced eventually transforming the 'flatness' of the initial monochrome view into the more illusory image of the actual space recorded.



Displacement (Removal Piece), 1970
Black & white photograph
48 × 76 cm
(DHA008)

A photograph documenting a work presented in 1970 at the ICA, London in the exhibition *British Sculpture Out of the Sixties*. The artist reproduces on the floor one of his hexagonal sculptures by means of "removal": the sculptural element is the result of sanding the gallery floor.



Richmond Park Series, 1967–68
5 Black and white photographs
50 × 39 cm | 39 × 50 cm approx.
(DHA007)