

[a-n] FOR ARTISTS

magazine

MAY 2003 £3.50 (€5.75)

Up, up & away

Blast Theory
Degree show focus
Art on the net
International



Over 150 jobs & opportunities



Been around the world and...

Manuel Saiz goes globe trotting in search of video art for the forthcoming Barcelona-based '25hrs'.

FOLLOWING MY INVOLVEMENT in '24 Hours of Videoart', in 2000 at Atlantis Gallery, London, I met two curators from Barcelona. After some discussion we came up with the idea for '25hrs', a twenty-five hour non-stop screening of single channel video art made since 1990 with a view to showing in Barcelona. We secured most of the funding for the project from the City of Barcelona, with support from the British Council and the Dutch Embassy. With an average running time of five minutes per work around 300 videos were needed, as no work was to be repeated. We sourced work from distributors, galleries; directly from artists through an open call for submissions (including via [a-n] MAGAZINE); and I visited key video art resources around the world.

We began with three days of viewing works at Lux's new offices in Dalston, London. We were able to profit from the organisation's collection of over 3,000 titles and began by previewing compilations Lux distribute for touring exhibitions; viewing work by artists with whom we were already familiar; and videos that Lux does not distribute but holds for research purposes only. A visit was also made to the British Artists Film and Video Collection in

London, run by David Curtis and Professor Malcolm Le Grice at Central St Martins college. They have a big collection, an extensive database and respond positively to researchers.

A few days later in New York I had made an appointment with Constant at the building of Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN), a TV channel that broadcasts 'Snackonart', a fortnightly half-hour video art programme now in its fourth year. MNN is one of four channels that Time Warner, the owner, cedes to the community as a social benefit. I saw a good collection of videos selected from the thousands Constant has received from all over the world.

Video art is not easy to sell and it has less of a presence in the extremely commercial spaces of Chelsea. I saw the most interesting works in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, a neighbourhood housing many energetic galleries. Here, I visited Foxy Production, managed by John Thomson, who previously worked at Lux and is now part of Electronic Arts Intermix, and Michael Gillespie, who until recently taught at Camberwell School of Art.

New York was followed by a quick but very productive visit to Toronto. Many galleries and arts organisations are located at 401 Richmond Street West, a

large converted warehouse in the city centre. Among these is Vtape, a video art distribution company initiated by artists in 1980. Approximately seventy per cent of the works they distribute are by Canadian artists, but they also handle work by international artists. An interesting element of their policy is that there is no selection – everything is distributed. Works of fiction or documentaries are lent to other organisations, such as the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Center – similar to Vtape but dedicated to experimental film. The excellent organisation and resources of Vtape led to the inclusion of many Canadian artists in '25hrs'.

My next port of call was Tokyo. The most important distributor here is Image Forum; even though it has many video art works, the background of most of the artists is in experimental film. Image Forum is home to a movie theatre; a feature film distribution company; a film and video school; and a magazine. It organises a prestigious film and video festival and edits tapes that are for sale: there are many activities not profitable in western countries that are commercially viable in Japan. They prepared a selection of works that met the requirements of '25hrs', particularly videos from their festival archive.





Whilst in Tokyo I was fortunate to catch the last exhibition of the Young Video Artist Initiative series, part of the pre-opening programme of the Mori Art Museum, which will open in October 2003 under the direction of the curator David Elliot. Tomoko Kuroiwa, a Goldsmiths college graduate now working at the museum, showed me the work from the complete programme. Kuroiwa put me in contact with many of the artists, some of whom are part of the Videoart Center Tokyo (VCT), a very active collective of artists. I visited their tiny exhibition space – on a similar scale to the living spaces in Tokyo – and their archive. Open for just a few hours each week it's possible to see the videos of artists who belong to the organisation and of other Japanese artists. They also present screenings in a local bar.

Spread Videoart Project has links with VCT and they share some artists but their main activities are the production of a Japanese language magazine/video-tape about video art and the organisation of screenings. Spread Video Art has no office and I viewed their tapes at the college of engineering where one of the members of the group, Katsuyuki Hattori, teaches. Both VCT and Spread Videoart Project are

very open to presenting works by international artists in their shows and screenings.

Next stop Taiwan. With no video art distribution companies and IT Park – Taipei's most important gallery – not proving very helpful, I made contact directly with artists with the help of Marko Daniel, a professor from Southampton University now working at the TechArt Center, a leading college of art and technology in Taiwan. At the centre I watched videos of students and teachers, some of whom had work in the Taipei Biennial at the Museum of Fine Arts.

Moving on to Hong Kong I visited Videotage, an artist-run organisation located in a former slaughterhouse owned by the city and part of the only artists' village in Hong Kong, also home to several artists' organisations and studios. Videotage began due to a need to share editing equipment and progressed to distribute their work and that of other artists from Hong Kong. They now distribute the work of other Asian artists and other artists with links to Hong Kong; and works related to the city. For the last few years the organisation has run Microwave, an annual electronic arts festival. Videotage is now the biggest Asian distributor of video art with a large collection of works from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan.

After a few day rest in London and a short visit to Barcelona to deliver my progress report and a heap of tapes, DVDs and CD-ROMs my final destination was Amsterdam to visit Montevideo – an integral centre for video artists with distribution just one of its activities. It is by far the most luxurious organisation I visited, both in terms of the spacious and well-equipped building as well as the resources they manage: documentation facilities; large exhibition spaces; a conservation service for museums; and equipment hire. They mainly distribute work by Dutch artists, but also handle selected works by artists from other countries.

The plan is to digitise the whole collection for Barcelona so works can be viewed on a monitor, played from a hard drive. The entrance to the archive is free and open to the public without restrictions.

MANUEL SAIZ IS AN ARTIST AND CURATOR BASED IN LONDON.

'25hrs' takes place at the *Poliesportiu del Raval, Sant Pau, 83-85 Ciutat Vella, Barcelona, on 9 May 2003 with screenings starting at 7.30pm.*

Clockwise from top: Jorgo Bravo and Manuel Saiz, two of the 25hrs curators at Lux's previewing facilities. Constant, director of Snackonart, at the Manhattan Neighborhood Network, with work by Matthew Barolo and Tabatha Tucker on screens. John Thompson and Michael Gillespie, directors of Foxy Productions. Koyo Yamashita, director of the sales and planning department, in his office at Image Forum, Tokyo. Video archive at Montevideo, Amsterdam. TechArt Center, Taipei. Previewing room at Montevideo, Amsterdam.



Contacts:

25hrs

The Video Art Foundation,
Passatge del Marquès de Santa Isabel
40, 08018 Barcelona, Spain
00 34 93 303 2298
info@25hrs.org www.25hrs.org

Lux

18 Shacklewell Lane, London E8 2EZ
020 7503 3980 F: 020 7503 1606
info@lux.org.uk www.lux.org.uk

British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection

Room 203, Central Saint Martins College
of Art and Design, Southampton Row,
London WC1B 4AP
020 7514 8159 F: 020 7514 7071
d.curtis@csm.linst.ac.uk
www.bftv.ac.uk/avantgarde

Snackonart

PO Box 050050, Brooklyn,
NY 11205, USA
00 1 212 330 7619
snackonart@yahoo.com
www.snackonart.org

Foxy Productions

129 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn,
NY 11211, USA
00 1 718 218 9016
info@foxyproduction.com
www.foxyproduction.com

Vtape

401 Richmond Street West, Suite 452,
Toronto, Ontario M5V 3A8, Canada
00 1 416 351 1317 F: 00 1 416 351 1509
info@vtape.org
www.vtape.org

Image Forum

2-10-2 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo,
150-0002 Japan
00 81 3 5766 1119 F: 00 81 3 5466 0054
info@imageforum.co.jp
www.imageforum.co.jp

Videoart Center Tokyo

Nakano 5-62-8 MKbuild. 3F, Nakano-ku,
Tokyo, 164-0001 Japan
T/F: 00 81 3 5380 8755
info@vctokyo.org
www.vctokyo.org

Spread Videoart Project

svp@svp.gentei.org
http://svp.gentei.org

Videotage

No. 13, Block PB567, Cattle Depot Artist
Village, 63 Ma Tau Ok Road, To Kwa Wan,
Kowloon, Hong Kong
00 852 2573 1869
F: 00 852 2503 5978
videotage@i-cable.com
www.videotage.org.hk/

Montevideo

Keizersgracht 264, 1016 EV Amsterdam,
The Netherlands
00 31 20 623 7101
F: 00 31 20 624 4423
info@montevideo.nl
www.montevideo.nl