DOUG HALL
Interviewed by Chris Hill
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CHRIS HILL: This project focuses on the first ten years and one of the things that hasn't been represented well in this history is what brought people together, what got people started working with video and I think that obviously there are a lot of different reasons. It also had a lot to do with what people have called the revolutionary aspirations of the time. So one of the things I'd be really interested in having you talk about is things that were inspirational, things that were important as far as your coming to use video although clearly you were using it is a context that was as much about performance and which is really difficult to define. I know that you made a comment on the critique form about the importance of keeping those categories open.

DOUG HALL: I can only respond very personally. I would say that there were, at the surface, several things going on simultaneously. One was the politics of the late 60's/early 70's which I think were very influential on a lot of artists who felt themselves involved in one way or another in the world beyond the studio. I think that there was a dissatisfaction even as a very young artist, even in graduate school, with the way we perceive the art world and felt that there were aspects of it that were no longer relevant to us and it had to do with how the artist was positioned within the cultural milieu, within the cultural system. Video, and media --and a general, and by media I mean activities that were non-objective, were not involved in object making but were involved with interacting with a context, being aware of the context that one was in and video and performance and certain aspects of sculpture seemed to me at the time very appropriate ways to get at it and by get at it I mean that this was an attitude that had less to do with aesthetics and more to do with social context that I felt engaged by and involved in. The early work which really started for me as a graduate student using video in a performance context...

CH: That was at Maryland?

DH: Yes, at Reinhart which is part of the Maryland Institute. After graduating, I looked to the east being New York and I looked to the west being California and for reasons that are no longer clear to me I chose California, I guess because I thought it was more psychedelic and less involved with the institutions which I felt were somehow repressive and oppressive. Coming out here we formed a group called T.R. Uthco and began to do works that were about media and about performance and very much saw itself within and art context but an art context very loosely defined, that involved ideas about doing public actions in the streets, art works that were to be seen outdoors over long durations, *[...?]32 fete per second per second* for example which was also video taped or had video as a component in it. And other performances that involved myself, Diane Andrews Hall and Jody Proctor. Simultaneously in the Bay area, there was a group called Ant Farm and we shared a lot of interests, in fact Diane

went to undergraduate school with both Chip Lord and Hudson Marquez so she was a connection to Ant Farm, socially at first. We began to see that they were coming out of more of an architectural background and we were coming out of more of an art and literature background that there were areas where we saw very strong mutual involvement. That had to do with interrogating media and coming to terms with the media landscape and out of that came pieces like The Eternal Frame and Media Burn, projects which attempted to interrogate the mythology of the media or structures of the media in a disrespective way for the most part, in a youthful and aggressive way.

CH: Do you feel like you were influenced by people like Macluhan? How much New Left ideology effected you?

DH: I think that we were --again I have to speak for myself-- I went to Harvard and was very influenced.... I was a member of SDS and I was very involved in the anti-war movement until I became disenchanted with it. I had contact with a lot of people both associate professors and teaching assistants who had a tremendous influence on me and also I think the atmosphere in the university at that time was very much about interrogating power, interrogating the educational institutions and I felt very much apart of that. In terms of literary influences or philosophical influences, I guess Macluhan a little bit. I was interested in the kind of notions that he was coming up with but I never thought that it was very deep really. I was more intrigued by what I saw going on in Europe with the Situationists and later I became very interested in the Yippies and performance as a political act although I don't really see my work ever having done that to that extent. Those influences were very strong.

CH: Were you able to get a hold of Society of the Spectacle, for example? How were the Situationist ideas coming through to you?

DH: A lot of it was coming through.. Its really more in retrospect that I realized who these people were because I really can't remember when I saw that. The information I was getting was from people like Marty Perrets who at the time was a teaching fellow at Harvard and was a student of Marcuse's, who later became a neoconservative and bought The New Republic. People like that were a conduit for that information, particularly around the Vietnam war.

CH: One of the things that seems really similar, a similar formation on east coast and west coast was that people worked as groups and collectives. Also in California, in addition to Ant Farm there was Telethon in Los Angeles and Video Free America, I guess they were called Electric Eye, in San Francisco. Could you say something about the way, ideas about how people should work, notions about the individual verses the group.

DH: I think that what is shared in those different groups is a questioning of the role of the genius, the role of the artist as the chosen person who functions outside of the context of society. There was a re-analysis of this. I think that what is quite different is how these groups, what these different groups were interested in. For myself, I never saw myself as particularly

involved in a kind of populism which I think was coming out of those groups. I wasn't so much interested in video taping street things or that kind of things. I was really aware of my actions as being art works. I saw that as being different. I see it as being less different now probably than I did at the time. There were actually very strong philosophical divisions between these groups and sometimes it became aggressive that you were not being Marxist enough. I'm not sure that that term was being used but that was the implication, that you were still involved in some sort of elitist activity that negated the utopian populism that seemed to be so important at the time. In Canada there were also groups, General Idea is an interesting example, Western Front Image Bank is another example.

CH: Were you in touch with them?

DH: Very strongly. More with Image Bank and General Idea that some of the other groups.

CH: You felt some kind of shared approach with them. General Idea is performing various institutional authorities.

DH: And also very clear about who their audience was. They always saw themselves as artists, to differentiate from documentarians or social organizers.

CH: Actually, this notion of audience is very interesting. Could you say something about who your audience was?

DH: I don't know who my audience is. It is an important issue and never one that I felt comfortable answering in a way. I'd like to think that my audience are those people that come in contact with the work, well obviously that's true. The argument against working within any institutional structure is that you only privilege those people who care to go to those institutions to see and engage with your work. That's the reason we did a lot of work outside of those interrogated public space, inserted ourselves into areas where you wouldn't necessarily see us. So the perception of us at that time could be as something that happened to occur. I retrospect that was very naive. These actions were from a very privileged point of view and they saw themselves as differentiating themselves from the social context which at the same time they were supposing themselves to be apart of. I think that that is part of the dichotomy or the multiplicity of what was going on at the time. That even as artists were trying to engage and critique the social context and extend the definition of what art and artists do. They were still inexorably caught up in the privilege of behaving in that way. I'm not saying that's a negative thing either. Its just a fact of how one is in the world or how we were in the world. I think that the audience was that audience that happened upon the event but more importantly was those people who would interpret, be interested in this type of this activity and in the process reinstitutionalize it which makes it possible for one to continue to behave in that way.

CH: The other thing that seems pretty interesting about that period of time is that there was...there were a lot of people who considered themselves artists but who were also writing what could be called criticism although I don't know that it was necessarily seem as writing criticism at the time. Some people have articulated that as being young scientists. I'm thinking of a remark that Tony Conrad made in an interview. OF course he is coming out of a math background at Harvard but also Hollis Frampton's writings from the time...

DH: Paul Ryan, a lot of them.

CH: It also seems like critical direction was being articulated by artists. Did you feel like that was happening in your group or on the west coast.

DH: I felt like it was happening less on the west coast. Writing is such an important part of what I do now and at the time it wasn't, maybe because I came out of this highly institutionalized, academic world that I just really hated and I didn't want to be associated with it. I wanted to destroy it. So I guess that my attraction was more to drugs and illogic that it was to formulating a coherent plan. In a way it was more reactive than I'd like to day it was. I would love to be able to say that it was premeditated, it was considered, it was well constructed. It was more instinctual and reactive at the time. Its only now, now being in the last 20 years that I can speak about it with any clarity because I have the clarity and the fiction of hindsight.

CH: How would you characterize what was going on in the west coast from '68-'71, that period where people are still fairly utopian in their goals and where liberation was functioning both as a political ideology as well as a consciousness expansion notion.

DH: I didn't get here until the summer of '69 so I'm really more of an early '70's presence here. So I'm witnessing the tail end or maybe the dwindling orgasm of hippidom that existed in the Bay area and this iconoclasm that was confrontational and somewhat inarticulate. I think its difficult to generalize about what was going on at that time. There was a very strong music scene, there was the beginning of a very strong gay and lesbian scene that I wasn't so much aware of at the time although I became aware of it about that time, nonetheless. I think there was a lot of foment in the city of San Francisco at that time that expressed itself in the Harvey Milk fascination and other kinds of events happening at the time. It was a sense that a lot of us shared a nation in crisis, in a moral crisis, that we were somehow part of the crisis though critical of the status quo, attempting to articulate alternatives but in a sense trapped in our own utopian recollections of an avant garde perhaps that somehow was aggressive, confrontational, critical, but also somehow removed and beyond the frame. Its only now that I realize that the position has to be other than that.

CH: That would be something to ask you about but before you go into what that position needs to be ... One of the differences that working in California as compared to the east coast and particularly New York State was that NYSCA ended up supporting a lot of these

collectives that had formed in NYS and artists... There was a huge increase in NYSCA funding, I think it was '70-'71 and the California Arts Council has never been so strongly supportive. So most of what you all were doing was being funded by yourselves. How do you think that issues of support effected it.

DH: I don't know how to answer that because we don't have a control group unless we are the control group and New York is the other part. I think were the placebo. We did get support. Some of the support we got came from individuals, some came from NEA grants. It certainly didn't come from CAC grants. We all worked. I worked on a train. Diane worked in a cheese shop. Jody worked as a carpenter. There are those kinds of things going on. I don;t know how to answer that question.

CH: But it doesn't seem from your work that that then put a commercial edge. You seem to see what you were doing as something different than gambling on mainstream... You still were strongly against those institutions.

DH: Or not assuming that they would not support my work in any way. And particularly here where the support system for art was so bad. That's why so many good, alternative artist-run spaces emerged in the Bay Area. Those were very supportive. Places like Langdon Arts and of course BAYVAC started then and BAYVAC was a tremendous resource for artists working in media as it continues to be today. The kind of high end, high culture institutions and I include KQED in that although they did have the center for experimental television but I was never part of that. For the most part these institutions ignored us and wanted us to go away.

CH: And who supported Langdon, BAVAC?

DH: BAVAC started with Rockefeller money as did many of the media arts centers. Langdon probably got funding from NEA. I think that all of these artist-run spaces began around the same time and that was when the NEA began to fund alternative spaces for work. Those were the major kinds of support. I think that's generally true on the east coast as well, don't you? Howard Wise was supporting ..Howard Wise very early started supporting our work and there were certain kinds of semi-legitimate institutions that were involved and supportive but I think of New York as places like The Kitchen and other places that were emerging.

CH: It seems one of the differences is because NYSCA came in at that period when the collectives were still very actively engaged with this kind of utopian --well I don't know how to describe it. I think utopian is actually too extreme-- Because I think that these people were really part of the times.

DH: In retrospect it seems utopian.

CH: What NYSCA did was they were immediately --by 1970 they were advising people to incorporate as not for profits so these tribes --Steina called them tribes, maybe she didn't coin the word, but you have People's Video Theater and Videofreex and Global Village and Raindance. And then shortly after that, the Kitchen that had been the Vasulkas and a couple of other people that used Wise as a pass through and Downtown Community TV. All these groups had been collectives and then they became centers and it seems maybe that's a little different in California because the funding came a little later. Although Video Free America got funding and they were a collective.

DH: I can't remember where their funding came through. You'd have to ask Jeff. The other difference was that our interest wasn't really in video. Video was a means to an end for us. That really differentiated us from people who got involved with KQED, the experiments with new television. Artist who were very much involved in the technology if television were given space to work and funds to work. We were interested in something other than that and in a sense, for those kinds of institutions to embrace us would have bee somewhat ironic and so we weren't particularly seeking that out.

CH: One of the things that seems interesting about the work that Ant Farm and T.R. Uthco did was that they picked up these symbols of pop culture... The sedan that you used for The Eternal Frame certainly..

DH: The fascination mobile.

CH: It seemed a lot about cars and posturing with cars in ways that had ---to say posturing doesn't really do it justice but then also your involvement with television. The Eternal Frame is such and unbelievably focused piece for that whole generation. That seems quite different that the east. There was pop art but it doesn't seem to have come out in performance and video as it did on the west coast.

DH: I'd have to say that the car obsession is definitely the Ant Farm side of the equation and not so much what I was interested in or Diane but became as we interinvolved it became a motif. I'm going to say this in retrospect because we didn't have this language at the time, I think that a piece like The Eternal Frame is very much involved with the analysis of media semiotics and trying to figure out what it is about these pictures that come to us after the fact and which we absorb as true and filled with meaning, how these kinds of pictures and images function within our metabolism and within our psychogeography, etc. etc. That to me seems to me, again in retrospect, very much a kind of structural way of looking at things and an intellectual way of looking at things. So it seemed ironic that us out here on the west coast who were on the verge of an hallucinatory, self-destructive ... would be analyzing popular culture and media culture with this kind of focus you describe. I think in the best work at that time you see that focus. I don't have an explanation for that, other than in a sense all of our backgrounds would lead us in that direction. I came out of anthropology for example, Jody

came out of history, Diane was purely an artist, came out of art school, and Chip, architecture, etc., etc. So the tools for analysis existed once we got off drugs.

CH: This is the other problem that I'm having which is how to make the drug component sound realistic at a time when its been so demonized.

DH: I think its a very important part of the equation.

CH: Its all about looking. The whole notion of perception and the importance of perception.

DH: And if you go back into all of these sort of '60's confrontations with culture have to do with how drugs moved into middle class culture and into the university, the privileged university youth. Psychedelics combined with the loss of faith in the political institutions forced those of us who were sensitive and unwilling to go the route that was predetermined for us, made this analysis and made this kind of behavior necessary. And maybe that's what we find most naive about it now and most utopian, that somehow there's a lot of hope wrapped up in this, a lot of dreaming wrapped up in this.

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DH: Kids in very good universities, predominantly white universities, who were being exposed to things that they had never imagined before, some of it radical political thought, some of it in the form of drugs, some of it in the form of an active war who's logic a lot of people couldn't understand. That privileged point of view of what was going on has to do with a lot of these people, myself included, coming from very secure economic backgrounds. That doesn't mean that there aren't people in that who are quite different than that who don;t share that privilege. I don't know if that somehow de-radicalizes those kinds of thoughts. I mean simply because somebody is at a good university and having those kinds of thoughts does that somehow negate it. Within the context of looking back on it does it say that its only going to have validity if all of these people had been working class people who had not gone to universities but had been radicalized through their unions. I don't happen to share that belief. IT makes sense to make those kinds of distinctions, particularly now.

CH: I wasn't involved with video then. I went to college in '68 and like I said I came from a middle class background. I saw a lot of people dropping out of school and people who may have become teachers or something but actually probably would have gotten Phds and become academics otherwise. I think that there was a tremendous amount of change. I've been reading stuff this summer for this project like The 60's Without Apologies. I think Iranowitz' article is pretty interesting because what he says is that basically there was a radical movement and it was different than, it wasn't a classic Marxist movement because it did come from students and it was about middle class, I can't remember the exact word he uses to describe the particular social stratum that was radicalized but that in fact there was a tremendous

amount of movement and you can measure that by the repression and the backlash that followed.

DH: I think that actually if you, not that I'm an authority on this but if you did a kind of social analysis of radicalism I think you would discover that a lot of it emanates out of the bourgeoisie and that Marxism is a critique of the bourgeois coming from the bourgeois. I think the question then becomes, does this acting radically extricate somebody from he bourgeoisie? In retrospect, I don't believe that it does. I guess that in the sense, the critique of the Situationists is somehow and of the Marxists is somehow correct in the sense that we've created this commodity culture which we're very much a part of even if we're on the fringe because its the tendency of the culture to consume and to commodify experience. So we end up much to our chagrin, and I think that a lot of the dilemma that we're feeling in the 90's has to do with the commodification of experience.

CH: One of the things that I'm trying to establish, even though it was short lived, there was a moment when in fact there was a radical version of art making and especially coming out of video it had to do with a way of addressing the asymmetry of production and reception and especially these early collectives, in different ways I mean they were each quite different. I'm definitely trying to summarize something and people should definitely look to the individual accounts, but I do think that there was something radical that was put forth and I'm particularly interested in looking at that now because I think that that's what's being dismantled. The fact that there has to be some kind of infrastructure, some sort of notion about reception and production in order to have an independent media field. Otherwise its going to be totally absorbed by the mainstream and its not going to be independent.

DH: I think that your analysis is quite correct. I think that if there was a shared belief system, it was that somehow we were engaged in something that was radical, that really hadn't been done before and using tools that had been associated --in its brief life up to that time although most of us had been brought up on television, that we were usurping the tools, the most pungent tools of the establishment and using them for an agenda that was threatening to the establishment. How threatening it was I'm not so sure in retrospect but certainly I think that the radical stand that was taken by artist and social theorists, etc. at that age has its repercussions today in every aspect of our lives.

CH: Then there's the backlash that has been planned since that period in time. Its very interesting to hear Pat Buchannan and Jesse Helms talk. Jesse Helms owned a TV Station.... Brian's time, chit chat....

There was a program that was put on a Pacific Film Archives as well as in New York called The Tapes of the Tribes, I think it was 1970 or 70. A number of people referred to it and I was wondering if you had any recollection of that?

DH: No, I don't. Did David Ross do it when he was there? I think he was still in Long Beach then.

CH: IT was mentioned in Radical Software and its interesting to me because it calls attention to this notion of tribes and some people recollected it as being the first east/west coast event, emblematic of a scene that people acknowledged extending across the country.

DH: I can't remember how I felt about it at that time but I remember hearing the word tribe it makes my skin crawl. I'm trying to remember if I'm just acting in my present form looking back on it but lets assume I'm not, and that I always felt this way. What I feel is that those kinds of attempts to put language to these phenomena and to generalize it by calling it tribe is sort of romantic notion of the primitive and I don;t think that I ever bought into it so strongly. I also hated that in the hippie movement, in the sense that the thing that unifies them is the almost stylistic attitudes and I think its more complex than that and more differentiated than that.

CH: I was just reading in Pat Mellencamp's book and The Eternal Frame and particularly its ability to encode the notion of audience and then compared that to early 80's postmodern critics like Baudrillard where the audience is presumed to be so distant. That's also something that I'm really interested in because I think structurally it seems that the audiences for many art events in the early 70's were presumed to have more intimacy, both with the makers and also with the event. Part of that seems to come from the whole rhetoric around psychedelia, that it was an experience and that you would combine with it in some way, your psyche and its psyche, but it seems also that one of the things that The Eternal Frame does is that it focuses outward on a social, cultural phenomenon; that its not really psychedelic; that it really is carefully coded in the real world and that it includes audiences in the edited piece which is actually one of the things that I like about it.

DH: There are a lot of references to the act of producing it as well.

CH: Most of it is a chronology of the production of the performance. Could you say something about your thinking about it at the time.

DH: I alluded to this yesterday, I think that The Eternal Frame, in retrospect.... There are two things going on. One is essentially, we were very rational people and able to formulate very rational ideas about things. We had very specific feelings about media and information and the kind of quandary that we were set into, especially at that time, when we were beginning to experience a spectacularization of our culture through media. Events began to appear on television that seemed to somehow be disconnected from any actual event although we understand that these represent actual occurrences. For example, the Apollo landing on the moon, a sequence of fascination events that started with the Kennedy assassination and that's still going on. We see these kinds of things going on. There is this perception but there wasn't a language that we had to describe them. We didn't really know that structural language that

was coming out of France at the time, that would call these things, whatever they would call them. I think that we were reacting to an event, reacting to a sense that we had of media and our relationship to it; trying to go into it and kind of reconstruct the narrative so that we had a perception of it, so that it was some how reconstructed. It was deconstructed as it was being reconstructed or reconstruction was a process of deconstruction but now in retrospect its very clear what was going on in that tape. Its very much about an analysis of media and a way of looking into this notion of simulation; how simulated events begin to take on a life of their own that is separate from the event and it becomes encoded and all of that --which we understood at the time but which we didn't have language for it. In a way the piece is an attempt to put language on it through visual means, a combination of guerrilla theater and structural film making.

CH: You said before that you'd done a lot of street stuff so you must have been fairly sophisticated in your notions about engaging people and probably had had various strategies for engaging audiences.

DH: We did and we didn't. WE weren't a street theater group by any stretch of the imagination. We did events that were in the world outside of the confines of galleries and museums for lots of reasons, not the least of which is galleries and museums wanted nothing to do with us. But also because we felt that to function there was the most important place to function.

CH: And also maybe because there was a scene there.

DH: There was a scene there but its not a scene that's limited to people who know. To do an event like the Eternal Frame out in Dealey Plaza, to use the set that had been used by the original event and to reconstruct it in this very strange manner, using a car which only had a vague resemblance to the actual automobile in which Kennedy was assassinated. One whole side of it was completely bashed in, it was running on two cylinders and billowing smoke. The handles in the back we from a hardware store. The roll bar was made out of a piece of steel with reflective tape on it. And yet these very crude images and stages sets were perfectly plausible for people who were witnessing the event. These were not people who were sophisticated about art. These were people who'd gone there to have the experience of revisiting a location that means a lot to them because of the way its bee mythologized within our culture. That's a very different kind of event than say, Media Burn which was very much a staged event where people were invited from the media, people who were in the art world who knew about it, etc. I think that this issue of audience is interesting. Looking back at what was, for me, a much earlier avant garde, the avant garde of the 60's, the fluxus group and that kind of thing, to me its amazing how presumptuous they are and how very pretentious it seems to me, even as taking on this anti-art position. Its all about valorizing the mythology of the artist and the kind of hermeneutical quandary that sophisticated art presents. It presumes that people understand the coding. Its for a very privileged audience. I would say that Media

Burn was for a very privileged audience. It doesn't negate it. It just describes some kind of difference in audience.

CH: Your work continues to be about spectacle and deconstruction of authority. You did Songs for the 80's and when was that 81, 82, 83. And then you get involved with weather and natural spectacles. You clearly decided to identify yourself as an artist despite the fact that you've certainly expressed a certain amount of ambivalence around who is an audience for art work.

DH: Of course its ambivalent because there's a kind of ambivalence to the audience and by that I mean that the general audience for art is made up of people who have an interest in art. The audience for philosophy is people who have the time and interest to read difficult texts. That doesn't mean that its not valuable, only that it understands its place within a larger context. For me personally, I don't care that not everybody sees the work. For better or for worse, I'm and artist, this is the context that I work in. Sometimes I wish I wasn't. That's the way I work. The structures and institutions that exist to support this work are reality to me. I think that they are often very silly and there's a lot that I have nothing to do with really but its still part of a system that I work in and one hopes that ideas, if they have validity, will disseminate in some form to an audience that's receptive to it that may not be completely wrapped up in art.

CH: It seems that by choosing a vocabulary that deals with spectacle in some ways you're speaking to different audiences. Perhaps those audiences, like the people at Dealey Plaza who were in tears. I've shown that tape to classes and that's the piece that people get unnerved by. These people were fooled although these are viewers that are totally jaded to TV but its interesting that they still feel this empathy with these people but on the other hand, what you were doing does have a possibility of reaching people if only through art students.

DH: This is a privileged audience and goes back to the earlier part of the conversation. Should one lament that a certain aspect of radicalism seemed to emerge out of the student ...I consider somebody, at least then, not so much now, but then somebody, especially somebody who went to some place like Harvard University were extremely privileged people and lets not pretend that it was otherwise. People like Michael Shamburg and others are also very privileged people. Again, I don't think that that is something to hang our head in shame over.

CH: I was just talking to Phil Jones the other day and his description of the Ithaca Video Project which was also a collective for the first couple of years ...I don't think that the people he was talking about were privileged people. They were to the extent that they were living in Ithaca I suppose but he grew up in the inner city in Chicago.

DH: I believe, although I have no proof about it, I believe that there was a lot going on with media within communities that we don't know a lot about. It would be really interesting to unearth some of that but we're talking about those people that were canonized and that's

Marita's argument against the canonization of this period and others and I think its a legitimate beef.

CH: It is really remarkable to see the kinds of stuff that was going on at the time. There were some films that were made I think in 1969 that were ....YMCA films... I think there was a lot of media going on....NAMID project.

DH: I want to say that its really powerful, but that's not the right word. I think its moving to discover this kind of work. I'm thinking about myself, my friends, my generation, and this notion of privilege that we were taking about earlier. We made careers out of this. A lot of people didn't and it would be interesting to look at the people who couldn't make careers out of it. One of the things that was beginning to happen then was that the tools of production, the sophisticated media tools were becoming available to a much wider spectrum of the population and just as we were trying to learn the language of it, I'm sure that there were communities that we know nothing about that were doing the same kind of thing. But were tied into the institutional structure that allowed this information to be disseminated and to be bought by big museums and bought by television stations to be shown.

CH: And it only got more problematic as the possibilities for getting stuff on television and also just distribution being based on needing to make some income, so it meant that they had to charge money and you're less likely to gamble on something that isn't going to be part of the canon. The other thing that seems really important about this period of time and which you seem to be involved in is performance and I mean performance in the way that we would identify performance as a kind of art making. I think that there is an inherent aspect of video that has to do with performance, not in all work, there's work that turns into a narrative and is edited and might as well be film but when you talk about independents accessing media there is a performance of access that in some ways is a performance because its a social performance and then what's really interesting about the Eternal Frame is that there are so many performances going on. There's the performance of the audience in dialogue at times with the performance of the piece and the rehearsal of the piece. I wonder if there's anything about these issues of performance that's... You've also continued to participate with video and performance equally and I wonder if you could say anything about that.

DH: I think that you've said a lot of the aspects about it in the way that you've phrased your question. I think that performance.... there are so many aspects to the attraction which performance had and performative attitudes and it had to do with notions about a kind of radical behavior that was difficult and in most cases impossible to be bought and sold and marketed in a traditional way in the way that art seemed to be marketable, paintings, for example, and sculpture. It understood itself functioning with or offering an alternative to the general consumption of art work. Also it understood itself structurally as expanding the boundaries of what had been considered to be say sculpture. My attraction to video in my earliest pieces in graduate school were very much exploring these kind of ideas; using video as a performative technique, as a means of expanding sculpture into issues dealing with time for

example. That's a kind of formal aspect to it. But I think that the thing that you were talking about; the kind of ambiguity of the artist as performer where the making of the work is made available to the audience and at the same time the artist is both the maker of the thing and maybe the viewer of the thing. There is this interesting structure. I'll tell you, the reason I stopped doing performances. I couldn't really see what I was doing so I was losing the ability to have a critical relationship to it and I thought that performance, and this is going into the early 80's, was moving into an entertainment area which I felt I had no talent in and no interest in. I felt that my interest in performance was not to fulfill the expectations of audience but was to play with the audience or I can't quite ..I'm not being clear on the difference, but I understood the difference. Its very different from feeling that you have to go up there and do a song and dance as opposed to go up there and make some work and I was interested in making work and when it no longer was a good way to make work then I moved away from it.

CH: That comes back to this whole issue of audience. Obviously, this shift in audience away from engaging directly. Part of that contract that you're describing which was valuable to you was elicited by the artist but part of it was the expectations that the audience brought to the work and that changed as well. DO you think?

DH: I think that's right. In a sense we all became jaded at the same time and maybe it has to do with the appetite....the appetite was being increased with the promise for spectacle. In order to play in the game you had to be willing to provide that level of spectacle and I wasn't interested in that. And also for me, performance became so arty. Its like that problem where you suddenly realize that the thing you had been doing which you thought was so radical is no longer radical at all, its just a bunch of stylistic moves that are no different than any other stylistic moves and that instead of doing real work, you feel like you're just going through the motions and creating what are the..... I feel like our generation created the Grumbacher performative kit and so you find yourself, "OK, I'm going to bring out this performative trick and I'm going to use that" and its just...who cares, lets move on.

CH: There are two questions that come up. One is what you're describing is a paradigm shift in art making. You're talking about a mode of working that you had

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The work sometimes appears to be very radical when really the issue is what are the thoughts that are going on in the work, what is being progressed in this, what is really at stake here. That's really different I think from taking on say, I'm going to be a painter or I'm going to be a video maker and I made video installations of a very specific type which create a very specific result and every institution knows pretty much what I'm going to do and I'm a bankable commodity functioning essentially within that system. I'm not interested in that. I want to find ways to continue to work, to continue to explore ideas that interest me understanding that basically I've been working on one idea

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To identify the context that I'm in, to be able to have enough flexibility to reason through it and in the process of reasoning with it to be able to tap into my various strategies of analysis and art making and to use those to try and make sense out of it for myself and hopefully for an audience which is both art conscious and ideally one that's not so art conscious. Its not about perpetuating a materials-based means of working. Its not about making video installations until I roll over in my grave many times, its about being radical enough to not depend on materials but to depend on the contents, to work to analyze and critique the contents. Do you know what I mean. The art institutions and I think the cultural and social institutions are set up to reward those people who find a materials-based way of working which I think is essentially a modernist way of working and to continue in that so that the institutions can hound on them to produce a type of work that they are familiar with and that they have built up a critique about and an audience for that is there to have these kinds of experiences.

CH: Who do you count as your...I mean you're not completely isolated in that process of analysis and critique that you're talking about. You do have some kind of inner circle of ... its basically like your intimate audience. You still must have a circle of friends who are your best critics and who you have an ongoing dialogue with.

DH: First of all you have a dialogue with yourself, or monologue, and then outside of that you have a dialogue with those who you are most trustful of, who's information you can value and helps you to make studio decisions, and beyond that you have a public audience which is made up of people who are either in the art world or not who are perceiving your work within the institutions where you show your work and that includes critics as well. All of that in a sense has an influence.

CH: I don't know when you started teaching. Was that in the late '70's?

DH: Yes, around 1980.

CH: How do you see teaching? Obviously Illuminating Video is an investment in transmission of...

DH: a kind of information. The kind of teaching I do, when its at its best, is one in which you have a contract with a group of students and you agree that you're going to engage in a process which in my case is usually in a studio situation because I teach studio classes. There's a shared understanding of the difficulty of the task and of the certain kinds of risks which will take place, which I see as intellectual risks, probably and that I'm just one figure in this process. I just happen to be older and more experienced than most of them. I don't feel that

differentiated from them in fact. Some of my best friends have been former students who are now advising me and are much more famous than I am.

CH: Is there anything that you want to talk about, some big chunk of this picture that we've left out.

DH: No, send it to me.

CH: The Eternal Frame could be seen in a lot of ways and I know that its not the only thing that you did in the 70's but its such a focused piece. On the one hand I was thinking about....I interviewed Woody Vasulka and one of the main interests for him was that he could unhinge video's frame and that the frame wasn't like film, it was something malleable and its interesting to compare the whole concept of frame. On the other hand, it also seems like that piece is really important because one could look back from the 80's, from an established, post-modernist position and be completely comfortable with what you all were doing and it also seems completely comfortable within the context of the 70's. That shift between 70's to 80's, as it turns out, it really did happen at the end of the decade. I have some ideas of what kinds of things happened but I was just wondering if you could speculate on that.

DH: I don't really know what your question is?

CH: What shifted between the 70's and the 80's, modernism and post-modernism. If you see their being a decisive shift at the end of the decade?

DH: There's not a watershed moment. Maybe people would argue that Watergate is the watershed moment. I think that the shift was taking place all along and I think a lot of the shift had to do with media, with the proliferation, almost the obscenity of information that was coming to us and the difficulties that we were having making sense out of it and making sense of ourselves within it. I think that what is provocative about the Eternal Frame and makes it something that we're still interested in is that it asks those kinds of questions and I think those questions now have been very well articulated by social theory, by other art work, by some aspects of philosophy so that we can look back at something like the Eternal Frame and say Ah Ha, see.... The spiraling of experience and part of.... I'm burned out?