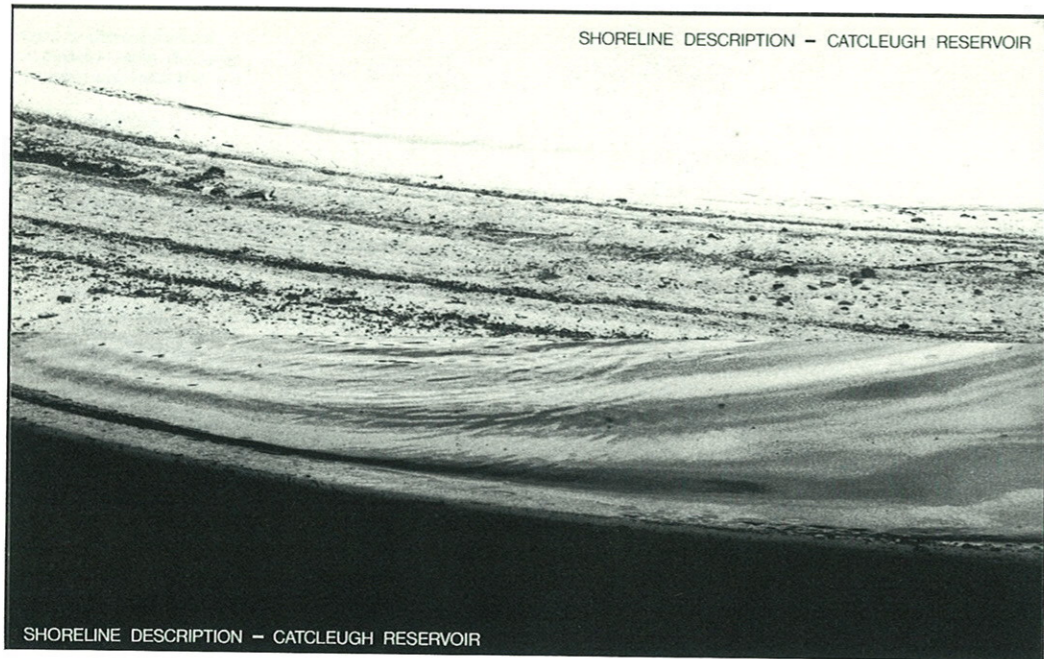


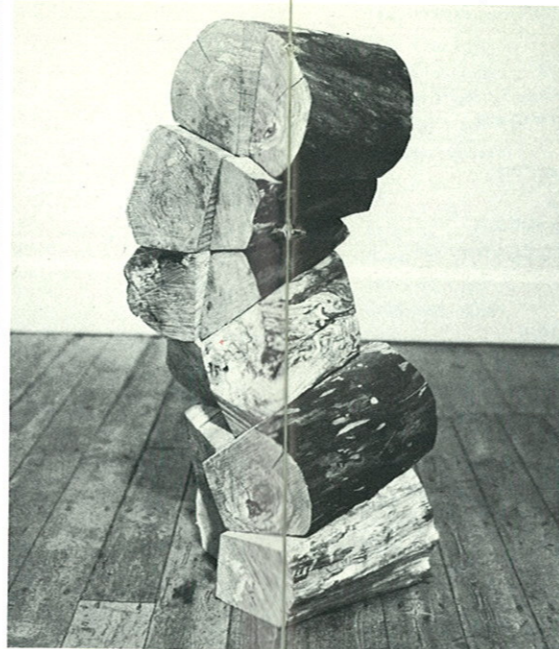
Hagward  
Annual 1979





SHORELINE DESCRIPTION - CATCLEUGH RESERVOIR

SHORELINE DESCRIPTION - CATCLEUGH RESERVOIR



For the first two Hayward Annuals the selectors were asked to work as a committee and to agree all the artists shown. It is arguable (and was argued by some artists and journalists) that both exhibitions failed as ideas and this might have been in part due to the collective decision-making process, to the problems associated with working as a committee.

This time we hope that we have resolved this problem by avoiding it. The artists we have asked to select the exhibition have made separate personal choices; indeed they are in boxes, walled off from each other, not linked except in this publication. We have chosen a 'young team' (under 35) from a number of artists who were invited to discuss their approach with us before the final group was fitted together; it was clear to us at these discussions that artists would choose from their own areas of work and that our wish to represent various areas of work would be reflected in the choice of selectors. Our original hope had been for a two point perspective, a view of artists both older and younger than the selectors and not necessarily from their own areas, to show how younger artists viewed their art world. In fact the artists would have been willing to do this, but limitations of space and the number of artists who could be

shown (about five each) meant that selectors felt they should concentrate on work by artists in their own area. The selectors therefore in some sense represent *painting from life, abstract painting, sculpture, performance and artists using photographs*. None of the selectors would admit fully to these categories, arguing for a greater complexity. They would all fight shy of a catch phrase used as a pigeonhole for the work with which they are most involved.

They have revealed aspects of work which confound this simple category-making by showing diverse work from what is assumed in each case to be a narrow seam. Most of them have chosen close associates, not only because the work is the best they can find but because it is most familiar to them. Perhaps it is a view of what is going on seen close up but the art world thrives on small groups of like-minded people supporting each other against the odds and conspiracy theory fits with art history. The exhibition is therefore a group of smaller exhibitions each containing small one-man shows. Although the artists are shown separately most within the selector's group know each other and therefore contribute to the statement made by that group.

The group of selectors met regularly to discuss the division of space within the

gallery and the contents of the catalogue: once that had been done each section was worked on individually and this has established the particular quality of each section of the exhibition. All the selectors are well known as *younger artists*: Helen Chadwick has exhibited in London and was cited as an *artist of the '80s* in *The Sunday Times* magazine; James Faure Walker is the director of *Artscribe*, an art magazine created by artists and which is becoming increasingly authoritative; Paul Chowdhury was the Gregory Fellow at the University of Leeds and both Nick Pope and John Hilliard have regular gallery shows in Europe and America and have been included in representative exhibitions of British art abroad. All the selectors teach in art schools part time, both in and outside London, regarding this as both a way of keeping in touch and an important source of income.

Two of the artists, John Hilliard and Paul Chowdhury, had few doubts about the artists they would show; the choice was obvious to them if they were to do the area justice. John Hilliard was fortunate, partly because the artists were his exact contemporaries, in persuading his ideal group to exhibit: Paul Chowdhury persuaded major older artists to show alongside lesser-

knowns. Chowdhury's selection is perhaps closest to what the Art Panel envisaged and it is perhaps significant that it is in this most traditional area, painting from the model, that the problems for each generation are felt to be similar.

Hilliard's selection represents internationally acknowledged contemporary British art; all of his artists sell more of their work outside Britain, and they all feel that they have been fêted abroad but neglected here. Their use of the camera implies a radical rejection of the conventional materials of art, which has been accompanied by the adoption of equivalent political or aesthetic attitudes.

James Faure Walker and Nick Pope work, like the majority of professional artists, in the areas of abstract painting and formal sculpture. They therefore each visited up to 30 artists before making final selections, although both were sure about their longer short-lists. Both areas have, mainly through the agency of *Artscribe*, been recently examined critically, and both seen as evidence of new dynamism in British art. They adhere to traditional modernist methods (paint on a flat surface, welded steel, carved or cut wood etc) but the distinctions between this and work of the last two decades are clearly drawn. The painters use more

complex subject matter (Faure Walker has called it *Fertile forms*) and he saw his task as selecting from a wider group those artists whose work, in his view, extended the sometimes limited vocabulary of recent painting. Pope has seen his task as that of finding and selecting the works of significant form-makers in various materials. His sculptors agreed to an open display which suggests common ground.

Perhaps Helen Chadwick's task has been the most difficult. Mixed media performance was nurtured in art schools as the result of radical artists' espousal of it during the 1960s (Oldenburg, Beuys etc) and it has remained volatile and unpredictable. Its lack of coherence, its unhappy relationship with funding bodies and its inherent anarchy have made it a vehicle greatly appreciated by art students, but this rebellious quality has not always been sufficiently controlled when they later become *serious* artists. Chadwick's choice is personal and idiosyncratic rather than representative. The inclusion of a film maker (Sinden), an artist whose international reputation was built on a formal group performance style (McLean), and an artist-engineer whose work has not been seen in a gallery context (Whiting) suggests her dilemma. Alongside these she has in-

cluded Genesis P-Orridge, who shows the results of researches in an area (correspondence and mail art) which he considers to be central to understanding his earlier work.

Chadwick has also been mainly responsible for the invitations to exhibit in the ancillary programme; this was seen as a way of allowing more work loosely based on performance (ie time-based, using a space for a given, usually short, period of time) to be seen.

All of the selectors were asked to consider showing their own work in the exhibition; three chose not to do so, not only in order to give more space to other artists but because they feel that selecting and showing are different jobs. (These three have shown in London galleries during the last twelve months.) James Faure Walker and Paul Chowdhury chose to exhibit both because they wanted to be *on the line* with their contemporaries and for the understandable reason that they have never shown work in a major London venue.

Richard Francis

Left  
John Hilliard, *Shoreline description*  
Catcleugh Reservoir 1978  
Middle  
Nicholas Pope, *Apple pile* 1979  
Right  
Helen Chadwick, *Train of thought* 1979



**Selector**  
Helen Chadwick  
*Four interviews*  
William Furlong  
**Artists**  
Bruce McLean  
Genesis P-Orridge  
Tony Sinden  
Jim Whiting

On being asked to select from my own area of interest, I found myself very much alone! Never having felt part of a school or movement in art, I have been drawn to work that has its own idiosyncratic appeal. It has been hard to pinpoint my decisions and rationalise why I consider this work and these artists to be significant. Analysis often serves to confuse rather than clarify. Ultimately it has been a very personal and often intuitive response.

I have looked away from art that concentrates itself within one traditional field of activity, and have chosen artists who work in many spheres and media. They tend to combine and adapt various disciplines – sculpture, sound, film, performance, photography – to create their own forms and techniques of expression. The essence of what they are attempting to express is rooted in their individuality. They exist as authors of their own brand of art.

As one would expect, their work is correspondingly diverse and it is difficult to discern obvious parallels; however, on reflection, certain linking attitudes and concerns become apparent.

Modern day culture is so fragmented and there is such a confusion of information and image that to begin to get to grips with facets of contemporary life and experience it is necessary to create new systems and mutate old conventional forms and graft them together in order to be more explicit. Primarily I am attracted to the work of these artists because I feel it to be vital and rooted in its time. It reflects real life and is conceived out of that very real experience; this context is common ground to which we can all relate and potentially identify with. By originating outside conventional art language, it stands on its own and is thereby directly accessible. It succeeds because its qualities are independent of internalised academic or esoteric art notions, without being compromised or philistine. It is not overweeningly aesthetic or self-congratulatory. At worst, the indulgences

are human and therefore forgivable, from the ascetically pure to the monumentally banal. It does not forsake the human for the grand.

It is a risky business exposing direct universal concerns without disguising them under a veil of specialised language and accepted formulae. I feel a new language is evolving, a *colloquial* art. The potency of the real plus the intimate – made public without relinquishing its personal insight and sense of mystery – can give the edge of truth that allows us in. There is no fundamental pressure on ‘having’ to understand. Humour can be an invaluable tool in humanising an art that takes itself too seriously; it sabotages the absurd restrictions of deliberate intent.

The artist is changing. No longer confined to traditional means of object making, his new position grants him greater freedom. He can exist as originator, engineer, technician, performer. His involvement may be directly visible and physically part of the whole, or he may act as catalyst and we witness the effects that he has caused second-hand. This puts the gallery-goer in a more demanding role, potentially confusing, as he may be required to alternate from being mere observer and spectator, to active participant and possibly even intruder. By being on the spot and presenting his art live to the audience, the artist is directly responsible for his actions and their consequences. This can be an exacting exchange, and the reactions can sharpen and feed-back into the original work, allowing it to change and be changed. This provides a more dynamic range of possibilities and stimulates a closer bond between the artist and his audience.

Many artists have chosen to move away from the gallery as the predetermined place in which to exhibit. Other spheres have become appropriate as the work demands more suitable situations in which to operate: sculpture and performance for the

theatre, music with *gigs* as venues, carnivals and festivals, the mail. This increased accessibility facilitates an exchange which is more social and at best less elitist. The gallery must also change or at least flex if it is to remain as the focus of activity, by injecting new life blood from the periphery into the credited art arena.

A generation of younger artists are continuing the challenge of developing personal yet pertinent means of expression, in the attempt to keep art real and vital. By introducing a changing programme of events, performances and screened works amidst the more established artists, I have used this opportunity to begin to represent the healthy diversity that might otherwise pass unnoticed.

Helen Chadwick

The following texts are based on 90 minute recorded interviews with each of the four artists. The resulting 30 page transcripts were then edited and condensed to produce the final version printed in this catalogue.

*William Furlong*

*You said recently, ‘my involvement in performance art came about by trying to extend the nature of sculpture’. You started, in fact, by making sculpture.*

**Bruce McLean**

Yes. I started making sculpture, but when I move to St Martin’s School of Art from Glasgow in 1963 I found that most of the time was spent in the various studios looking at sculpture, discussing it, circumnavigating it and carefully positioning oneself in relation to the sculpture. The sculpture itself seemed to be like a catalyst for grouping and positioning of the people who would then go through ritualistic movements and codes of behaviour. In the 1960’s, certainly at St Martins, there seemed to be specific codes of behaviour, adopted while viewing sculpture.

*So you became more interested in the attitudes surrounding the work?*

Well, yes, but I went there not to examine the attitudes, I went there to make sculpture, but when I made a piece, people would come around and look at it. Eight to ten people might walk around the sculpture, get down on their hands and knees and look at it – there would be long periods of silence – incredible periods of silent observation. I didn’t think at the time this was in any way funny but it did seem to me quite interesting that the sculpture could generate behaviour in that way. So I started to make works around the behaviour, setting up situations and spending lots of time observing a piece of work and asking others to perhaps join me in the observations – most of the work I have done has been to do with a questioning of responses and attitudes.

*What motivated you to actually participate in your work and therefore to become part of it?*

Well, I never wanted to be involved in anything other than making sculpture. The artists I met when I was young always seemed to have a certain presence, they

seemed to be different from other people, they seemed to behave differently. I used to go to their studios but I was often amazed to find that the work I saw there was so mundane and dull, it was the person that interested me and not necessarily what they produced. I really do think that the person is more important – I have often seen mundane work produced by very interesting people. So to sum up, human contact and interaction have always been important to me rather than producing something then putting it on the wall or floor and walking away.

*In 1972 you presented a work at the Tate Gallery called King for a Day. This was, in fact, a catalogued Retrospective. You announced at that time you were giving up art. What was behind this statement and what did you do subsequently?*

Well, I wanted to shift out of an area and get away from the category or context which I increasingly found stifling. I wanted to try and operate outside of the established structure in order to do things without the official stamp of art on them. This meant that I could do performances, make a film or dance or gesture as a person within a neutral situation and not depend on the *validating* effect of the gallery context. I felt that a lot of what was happening only had credibility because of its placement in a gallery – the work wouldn’t have had this credibility elsewhere.

*You started teaching at Maidstone College of Art in 1969 and met a group of students including Paul Richards who, I understand, was instrumental in energising the situation there. This involvement culminated in a group called Nice Style. What were the early concerns of Nice Style?*

We tried to operate as an art group by using a different structure. We weren’t interested in the art structure for reasons I have already explained. I was also keen to work collaboratively rather than as an individual artist. We thought we could utilise the rock music structure in so far as it represented an already established network of performance venues backed up by an information/publicity machine. Our first performance took place at Croydon College of Art on the same bill as Kilburn and the

Helen  
Chadwick  
*Four  
interviews*  
William  
Furlong  
12/13



more scope, than just a question of means etc.

*A great deal of art uses the gallery as the terminal point for its presentation whereas you use the gallery as the starting point.*

Yes, most of my installation pieces are about that starting point. They are concerned with the initial question that anybody might ask themselves when entering a gallery or museum – where do I begin or who is that artist? etc. And I am hoping that whoever enters the space, asks some of the questions that I myself have asked, as that really is where my current ideas begin. Something where the process of observation hopefully establishes a more critical awareness, whether it be towards certain objects found within the gallery, or towards a certain intensity of light and shadow cast across a gallery wall.

*You create an actual relationship in time with a particular site; in this sense your work is time-based, as a film or performance might be.*

If I show a film loop within a space for say an hour, you might begin to become more critically aware of certain other aspects, perhaps more to do with the surroundings. For instance I might walk onto the screen carrying a chair or bouncing a ball, you glance away from the screen and notice the same chair placed in front of the screen and the ball resting on the floor at the other end of the gallery. Events that create a sense of illusion extending itself to the physical space – in which you are standing. Alternatively, you might decide to sit down in the chair and look away from the screen, across the room, and notice that your position is reflected back to your angle of view, in a sense back into the illusion, as a displacement of the physical self. And if you sit there for long enough you begin to see other aspects and perspectives, that are not entirely given in the first instance, maybe then, you really do begin to see the idea for what it is, and the way it is evolving. There is a constant question and answer game that goes on, and although illusion is part of it, I want to emphasise the real situation as it exists, at the same time.

*How do you approach your installations?*

To begin with I am actually using the basic physical characteristics of a space as one

aspect of the idea, the others being whatever ideas, colour, material, objects that I bring to that location, and what is brought to it by people coming to see my work. I prefer that situation as an artist because I feel that this kind of event forms as a direct engagement with my ideas – thinking, at a time that is both close and pertinent to the concerns – and the situation that I find. There is also a chance element involved during the setting up of these events, that often projects a transitional quality within each event, that is particular to the location in which it is formed. Also I feel that it is important to stress that my installations have very specific durations, they exist in time only for the length of an exhibition/presentation. Within that time span, changes occur that are temporal evolutions, dependent on the time of year, day or moment that you might see the piece.

*You said recently about your installation at the South Park Hill Arts Centre 'Events in which certain aspects of the gallery's physical site become integral, perceptible, influencing factors to the nature and constructs of each individual idea/event.'*

As I have already said, when I am setting up an installation I'm only setting up one half of the idea, with the space that I use becoming the surface of my concerns and in a way, the environment within which the idea is finally formed – realised. Without that situation my current ideas would remain invisible.

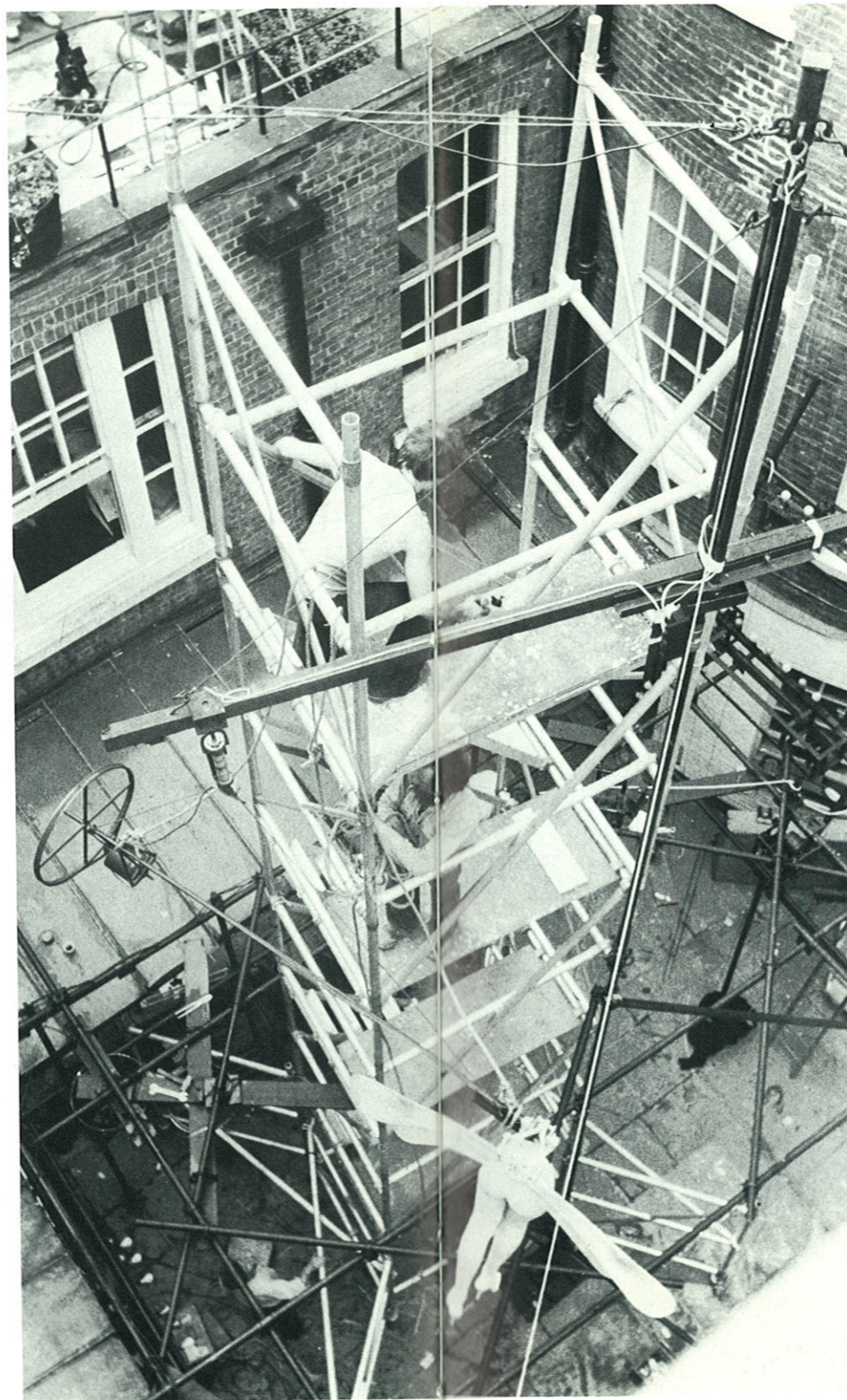
*You have been making machines of one sort or another since you were five years old. What is it that has always interested you about machines?*

**Jim Whiting**

I think it is trying to create something that eventually does something I can't predict. It's like making a little life. I'm always hoping that my machine is going to do something unexpected, or amuse me like a companion.

*To what extent is the machine's unpredictability important to you, or do you try to programme its movement?*

Well you can't. Unpredictability is inevitable in so much as at first they might not work or that they might go wrong. Even if I plan the machine out in great detail



beforehand, I am still surprised by the result.

*How do you go about actually designing and making your machines?*

I think that the process starts with the imagination. I imagine an action or some ridiculous movement which I would like to see. I then set about trying to make it. I tend to use what is around me, or parts and materials I can buy cheaply. When I get to the stage of making the machine I feel that because I want to see it so desperately it might be something that can interest someone else.

*Your machines in all instances have moving parts. Are you interested in constructing static pieces, or do they always have to move?*

Yes. That's very important to me. I want to make living things, I'm not interested in anything static. However, I do like static aspects of the machines. I often look at a show after it's happened, I look up and see all the wires up-a-loft with the big structures and I enjoy looking at them.

*In your more recent work you have actually enlarged the scale significantly so that people have to work on scaffolding and you fill up huge volumes that physically tower over the individual, an example of this being your recent installation in the courtyard of the Architectural Association.*

Well, that courtyard is an excellent playground for me, because one can erect something there of great dimensions – something big enough for people to take notice of. If you look at something the same size as the human body it has a certain impact relating to the scale of another person. If, however, you see something of daunting size you adopt a very different attitude, perhaps that of fear in that it could actually do you some harm.

*In the work you are presenting in the Hayward Annual, you will be constantly present in or near your machine. How important is this to you?*

I like to be with my machines, as much as possible, and treat them as a serious industrial enterprise. I've had thoughts about future shows and I would like to do a very big one in a London Park, using professionally erected towers, cables, and a gantry for all the people working on the construction. They would slowly move across the sky,

like little dots, to fix a connection or something, and in so doing become part of the show. I want to be with the machine all the time. I want to look at it and see what all the parts are doing. Anything can happen over the duration of six weeks and apart from me repairing faults as they occur, I might want to introduce new elements from time to time.

*There seems to be an underlying feeling present in your work, that is, the delight you have in being able to put things together which will then perform basic motions, all of which combine to create a very elaborate spectacle, although the actual mechanics involved in many instances are quite primitive and not at all sophisticated.*

I have often embarked on new ways and more efficient methods of controlling my machines using electronics and solid state circuitry. But to me a circuit isn't visual enough, it is only of value to me if it's visual. I prefer to work in simple mechanical terms, if I am going to build a control system it will be a huge complex of relays clacking away with little wires twittering and wobbling and banging. All of this will be working off a mercury switch which taps away erratically and switches various things on and off.

*You appear to want to make machinery something to enjoy, to be entertained by. This of course is the reverse of everyday life where we are either subject to it, at its mercy or merely take it for granted.*

I am using machinery to perform dreams. To make dreams come true. I am building up a picture with machinery. I do it in the cheapest, easiest and quickest way I can.

*What do you want your public to go away with, having seen your machines; how do you want them to respond?*

I want them to go away with a query of one sort or another, with a question, not with an answer. I want them to feel that they wish they were there a bit longer or perhaps, 'how was that done?' They might on the other hand, have ideas about adding to the machine – I want people to go away with something positive in mind.