

POSTE DES SECOURS
ANGLAIS

British Art Studies

June 2018



British Art Studies

Issue 8, published 8 June 2018

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Published by:

Paul Mellon Centre
16 Bedford Square
London, WC1B 3JA
<https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk>

In partnership with:

Yale Center for British Art
1080 Chapel Street
New Haven, Connecticut
<https://britishart.yale.edu>

ISSN: 2058-5462

DOI: 10.17658/issn.2058-5462

URL: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk>

Editorial team: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/editorial-team>

Advisory board: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/advisory-board>

Produced in the United Kingdom.

A joint publication by



PAUL MELLON
CENTRE

YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

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“The Art Game”: Television, *Monitor*, and British Art at the turn of the 1960s

Michael Clegg

Abstract

This article examines the coverage of the visual arts by Monitor, the pioneer arts magazine series broadcast by the BBC between 1958 and 1965. It explores Monitor’s place in the evolution of approaches to visual art on British television and assesses Monitor’s wider impact on the “art support system” (in Margaret Garlake’s phrase) of the late 1950s and 1960s. Through readings of three Monitor films (“Scottish Painters”, about Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde, “George Chapman: Painter in Wales”, and “Private View”) it argues, firstly, that a new emphasis on story or parable by programme makers came at the expense of engagement with critical debate of the kind maintained by print media and radio, and, secondly, that by the turn of the 1960s television was shaping the approach of commercial galleries whilst simultaneously masking its institutional power to viewers in favour of a disinterested, everyman pose.

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Acknowledgements

The research underlying this article was completed at Birkbeck, University of London. I would like to thank: the BFI Research Viewing Service; the BBC Written Archive Centre, and in particular Matthew Chipping; the Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden for access to “George Chapman: Painter in Wales”; and two anonymous reviewers.

Cite as

Michael Clegg, ““The Art Game”:
Television, *Monitor*, and British Art at the turn of the 1960s”, *British Art
Studies*, Issue 8, <https://dx.doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-08/mclegg>

The BBC's first broadcast of *Monitor*, on 2 February 1958, brought something new to television. The series' open ended "magazine" style used a brand name, a regular time slot and a recognisable lead presenter, in this case Huw Wheldon, to marshal into single programmes diverse segments about the arts by various directors. The format had been successfully developed by the broadcaster in current affairs, notably through *Panorama* and *Tonight*, but this was a first experiment in translating it to dedicated reporting on the arts.

¹ Shortly after the first transmission Anne James, assistant to the production team, wrote in an internal memo that, "it is quite certain that this is the only programme of its type in the world." ²

Television itself had emerged as a powerful cultural presence during the 1950s, and with remarkable rapidity. On 1 January 1950 only 3.75 hours of programming per day were broadcast, to a potential audience of 340,000 households; a decade later 17.5 hours were provided to 10.5 million licence holders, with, from September 1955, a choice of channels between the BBC and the new, commercially-funded Independent Television. ³ If the impact of television on how families spent time and arranged their homes was profound and immediate, the effect on the culture of the visual arts is harder to judge. ⁴ However the available evidence suggests that here too the influence was significant, as shown by such indicators as exhibition visits. In discussing a survey of attendance at post-war exhibitions, a *Burlington Magazine* editorial in 1966 noted that "television was not a factor at all until the 'Dutch Pictures' in 1953, when Sir Gerard [sic] Kelly made his famous appearance on screen, raising the attendance from about 2,000 a day to . . . 13,000 . . . Kokoschka's exhibition would never have been so well attended, had it not been for his appearance on TV." ⁵

Within the art history of the British post-war period, however, the role of television as a still new, and potentially disruptive, medium has not been a subject of analysis. ⁶ The scholarly literature which does exist on the development of arts television comes instead from a film and media studies tradition. In the case of *Monitor*, for example, a single scholarly article, published in 2011 by Mary Irwin, considers the institutional context of the series' creation and the marginalisation of women within its production team. ⁷ *Monitor* is discussed extensively in two book-length critical histories of arts television, one published in 1993 by John Walker, and one in 2007 by John Wyver, which each propose typologies of arts programme, with *Monitor* recognised as the prototype arts magazine. ⁸ However, whilst of great value in its own terms, this literature is primarily concerned with television history, and makes limited connection to the art historiography of the period—for example few links are drawn between television coverage and the vigorous critical debates then being conducted in print and subsequently examined by

art historians such as Margaret Garlake and James Hyman.⁹ John Wyver has published a detailed study of a single *Monitor* episode, Ken Russell's programme-length film "Pop Goes the Easel" from 1962; however, Wyver's primary concern is again with television history and the innovative semiotic freedom of Russell's direction (Fig. 1).¹⁰

[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 1.

Ken Russell, *Monitor: Pop Goes the Easel*, 1962, film, 42 minutes. Courtesy of the British Broadcasting Corporation (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00drs8y/monitor-pop-goes-the-easel>).

In her work on the social history of British art from 1945 to 1960, Margaret Garlake has developed the concept of the "art support system" to describe the network of institutions which underpins artistic activity in a modern state.¹¹ Though Garlake does not consider the emergence of television, her concept provides a useful framework for addressing this lacuna in the art history of the period, and for thinking about both the vectors through which television could affect art and how television related to existing aspects of the social context for art. Looking primarily at art production, Garlake emphasises the expansion of art education, the creation of new commercial dealerships, and the emergence of the state as a patron in post-war Britain. Of course, elements of the "support system" also shaped the reception of art, for example by establishing its monetary value and the terms of critical debate. These included art publishing and commercial and public galleries, but of particular importance were those institutions that supported critical discourse. Garlake notes that "ideas and theoretical constructions characterise the support system of the 1950s" in particular, the period was one of intense debate around such issues as abstraction, realism and political commitment.¹² Both Garlake and Hyman have described some of the channels through which these conversations were pursued, notably serious but non-specialist magazines such as the *New Statesman* and the BBC's *The Listener*.¹³ Radio, too, offered a channel for substantial critical interventions, from Nikolaus Pevsner's Reith Lectures, *The Englishness of English Art*, in 1955 to David Sylvester's review of *The New American Painting* on the Third Programme, the Corporation's principal cultural radio network, in 1959.¹⁴



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 2.

Ken Russell, *Monitor: Scottish Painters*, 1959, film, 12 minutes. Courtesy of the British Broadcasting Corporation (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02j4ps1>).

In the rest of this article, I use *Monitor* to consider television's evolving role and its impact on the "art support system" at the turn of the 1960s. After an assessment of the place of *Monitor* in the history of visual art on television, detailed readings are made of three *Monitor* programmes: "Scottish Painters" (Fig. 2), directed by Ken Russell, from 1959, which is about Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde; "George Chapman: Painter in Wales", directed by David Jones, from 1961; and "Private View", directed by John Schlesinger, also from 1961, which is about four young artists approaching their first solo shows (Fig. 3). Through these I look to demonstrate how, as television stepped into the arena of contemporary art, it started shaping other institutions around itself. Yet at the same time it also obscured its own increasing impact on the art market and on the reception of art by representing itself as a naïve commentator, aligned with its imaginary viewer on the outside of the support system. Developing approaches by programme makers also tended to avoid engagement with the key contemporary critical debates that were being pursued in print and echoed on radio, emphasising instead biography and helping to establish the conditions for the "promotional culture" that was to further reshape the British art scene. ¹⁵



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 3.

Jimmy Howie, *Monitor: Private View*, 1960, film, 38 minutes. Courtesy of the British Broadcasting Corporation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5qKgYgRvPA>).

Early Television Coverage of Visual Art and the Creation of *Monitor*

Coverage of visual art was substantial within television's limited pre-war output and much of this was presented by artists themselves.¹⁶ Regular television broadcasting in the London area started on 2 November 1936. Almost immediately, on 7 November, John Piper presented a talk from the television studio about the art on display in London's commercial galleries. This programme, *The Autumn Galleries*, started a short series that ran until March 1937.¹⁷ Other artists were invited in to discuss their own work: for example a series entitled *The World of Women* included short programmes in February and March 1937 by Laura Knight (on painting), Lady Kennet (on sculpture), and Pearl Binder (on illustration).¹⁸ Academic perspectives emerged with the television debuts of R. H. Wilenski and Kenneth Clark in the series *Artists and their Work* in December 1937, the latter presenting a piece on Florentine paintings in the National Gallery.¹⁹ The next programme in this series featured Paul Nash on surrealist art.²⁰

Pre-war visual art coverage was dominated by the illustrated lecture from the television studio, complemented by occasional conversations (for example between Piper and Serge Chermayeff) and group discussions (such as the “Traditional versus Modern Art” debate chaired by William Rothenstein in 1939, for which a full transcript was published in *The Listener*).²¹ These formats continued to be utilised and developed when television broadcasting resumed at the end of the war, when visual art was again given substantial airtime. Coverage of exhibitions included John Rothenstein on the Tate’s show of American painting in 1946, the modernist critic Douglas Cooper on van Gogh’s *The Yellow House* in 1947, to coincide with a Tate show of the artist’s work, and a brief attempt to revive the gallery round-up in 1950, this time presented by the painter Rodrigo Moynihan. The series *The Eye of the Artist*, which ran from 1947 to 1949, epitomises the eclectic subject matter being tackled at the time. It featured a programme on the art of India, invited an artist to paint live in the television studio, and hosted a conversation about the potential of industry and commerce to act as modern patrons. In 1958 Kenneth Clark’s programmes for the new commercial channel Independent Television (ITV) started with the series *Is Art Necessary?* However, the use of expert guests (including John Berger in the third episode) was soon abandoned in favour of a more focused lecture format, which was also adopted for Clark’s *Five Revolutionary Painters* in 1959 (Fig. 4).²²

[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 4.

Kenneth Clark, *5 Revolutionary Painters: Pieter Brueghel the Elder*, 1959, film, 28 minutes. Courtesy of BFI (<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-pieter-brueghel-the-elder-1959-online>).

Given how little material survives, the content of these programmes is often difficult to judge. However, they seem to have engaged multiple viewpoints on intellectually-challenging and controversial (if mainstream) topics. For example, the *Radio Times*’ listing for *Argument on Picasso*, which was broadcast for the artist’s seventieth birthday in October 1951, noted that, “Discussion still goes on over the work of one of the most controversial figures of our time” and promised that the debate would be “taken up in the studio” with the aid of original drawings borrowed from the Institute of Contemporary Arts.²³ John Wyver has argued that the predominant formats for presenting visual art in British-made television before 1962 gave primacy to the word, with an explanatory voice constraining the polysemic possibility of pictures.²⁴ This is a useful emphasis, but it is also worth noting that the voices heard in such programmes articulated diverse critical viewpoints, as with the debate in *Argument on Picasso* or the use of a partisan, contentious art critic such as Douglas Cooper as well as established figures such as John

Rothenstein. There was also an interplay between different media, with connections made between television and the established critical culture of radio: Cooper's van Gogh piece, for example, was linked to an extended discussion on the Third Programme.²⁵

From 1951, the BBC began to show a number of films directed by John Read, son of the prominent art critic Herbert Read, several of which were made as co-productions with the Arts Council.²⁶ As films these were more ambitious productions than the largely studio-based live television output. The focus was on British art, and often—as in the case of Moore, Sutherland, Piper, and Sickert—on a modernist inflected idiom, but also with an emphasis on the British landscape and the British artistic tradition.²⁷ Most took the form of filmed profiles, often emphasising the act of creating a particular artistic work. As John Wyver has noted, they offered the viewer an unusually open-ended approach, in contrast to more overtly didactic formats, and had a limited contribution from critics (characteristics which were to be inherited by aspects of *Monitor's* content, discussed below).²⁸ A partial exception to this approach was Read's "Artists Must Live", first broadcast in 1953, an investigative essay into a perceived crisis of patronage narrated by Basil Taylor (Fig. 5).

[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 5.

John Read, Artists Must Live, 1953, documentary television broadcast, 29 minutes. Courtesy of BFI (<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-artists-must-live-1953-online>).

In 1958, most of Read's output to date, along with two new films, one on Reg Butler and a further one on Henry Moore, were packaged into a series, *British Art and Artists*, and shown during *Monitor's* first summer break. *Monitor's* own first episode in 1958 included a six-minute segment on Jacob Epstein (who was 78 in 1958 and was to die the next year) which was also directed by Read (Fig. 6). The soundtrack used an archive recording of Epstein reflecting on his work and practice, his words juxtaposed with still photographs of his sculpture and his studio (taken by Anthony Ireland of the RCA). The camera roves amongst details within these stills, the results spliced with pre-existing film of Epstein carving. The short film put down a marker for how directorial ingenuity would be applied to presenting visual art within *Monitor* and indicated Read's influence on its approach.



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 6.

Introduction by Huw Wheldon with photography by Anthony Ireland, Monitor: Jacob Epstein, 1958, documentary television broadcast, 7 minutes. Courtesy of British Broadcasting Corporation (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0160sd6>).

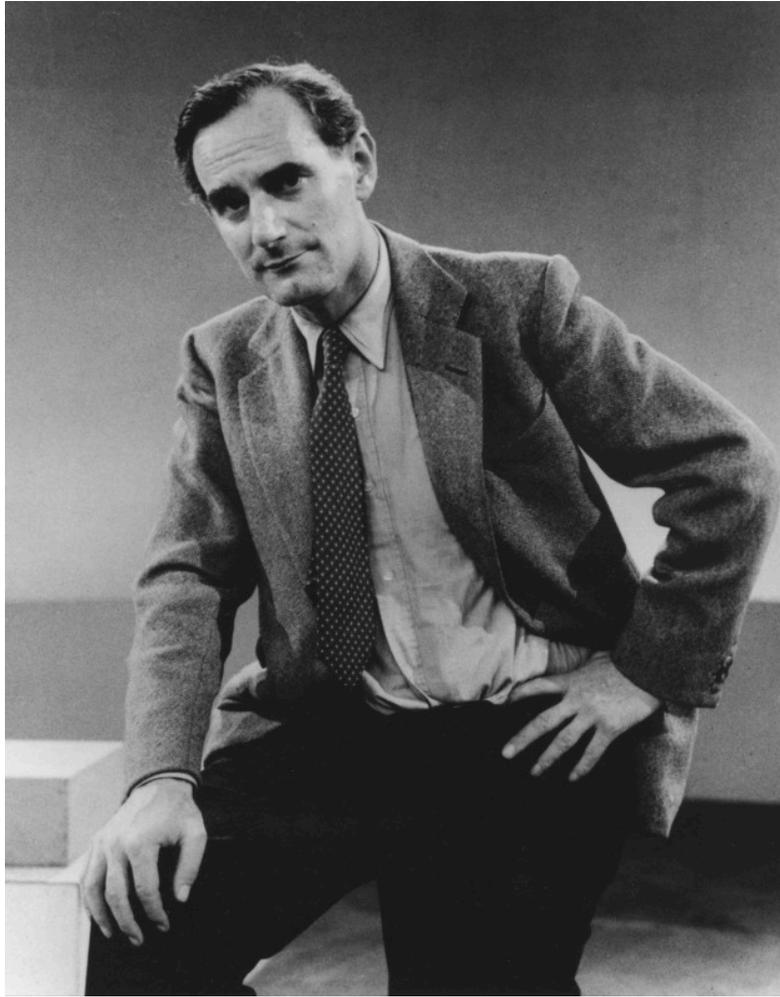


Figure 7.

Bob Collins, Sir Huw Wheldon, 1958, bromide print, 36.5 × 29 cm. Collection of National Portrait Gallery, London. Digital image courtesy of Estate of Bob Collins / National Portrait Gallery, London.

Despite the relatively rich context of visual arts programming, by the mid-1950s, as the audience grew rapidly, the BBC perceived a gap in its coverage. Partly this was about the lack of a format which brought together all the arts in one, distinctive place, but there also seems to have been a sense that the existing offer lacked immediacy and responsiveness. As late as 1956, Catherine Freeman, a BBC staffer, felt that it was “extraordinary” that the BBC didn’t have a serious series which covered the range of arts and had topical bite.²⁹ *Monitor* was the BBC’s response and, as noted earlier, within the production team the first edition was seen as something entirely new (though Read’s short Epstein segment indicates how *Monitor*’s innovation encompassed existing traditions). The series aimed at a comprehensive coverage of theatre, literature and music, as well as visual art and, whilst it paid attention to the art of the past, the magazine format

was intended to support the reporting of current events such as exhibitions and performances. From 1958, the forty-five-minute programmes were broadcast fortnightly at around ten o'clock in the evening, with a regular summer break. Huw Wheldon (Fig. 7) acted as presenter, principal editor and figurehead for the *Monitor* brand from the first transmission until August 1964; a final season under Jonathan Miller ran until July 1965.³⁰ *Monitor's* innovative format, combined with Wheldon's concern to develop new talent, made the series the cradle for a number of influential careers in production, direction and presenting. Its staff included Miller, Melvyn Bragg and Humphrey Burton, as well as the future feature-film directors Ken Russell and John Schlesinger.³¹

Monitor's influence on broadcasters is clear from ITV's launch of an imitator, *Tempo*, in October 1961. However, the size and composition of the series' audience is difficult to reconstruct. *Monitor* was frequently broadcast after 10:00 p.m., later than other magazine programmes such as *Tonight*, with a regular 6:15 p.m. slot, and *Panorama*, which usually started before 9:00 p.m. A 10 p.m. slot was used for other arts coverage (the *British Art and Artists* series aired at a similar time) but suggests the expectation of a relatively niche audience. One specific piece of information comes from an "Audience Research Report", compiled after the first broadcast of Ken Russell's *Monitor* film, "Pop Goes the Easel" in 1962.³² This gives an estimated audience of seven percent, against twenty-six percent for ITV programmes shown at the same time (given the two-channel environment, the percentages seem to be of the total potential audience).³³ No comment is made about this being an unusually low figure, so again the indication is of a niche audience. *Monitor* gained some positive reaction in the popular press: it was named as the *Daily Worker's* "Programme of the Year" in 1958 and, whilst Peter Black in the *Daily Mail* described it as "the television equivalent of a posh weekly," he was generally supportive. However, the series was also willing to play up to a highbrow image; for a repeat of "Pop Goes the Easel" in 1963, the *Radio Times* listing defiantly reproduced the *Daily Worker's* previous condemnation of the film's elitism: "A form of audience rejection at its worst".³⁴

***Monitor's* Coverage of the Visual Arts**

The visual arts were at the core of *Monitor*. John Walker has estimated that within the first sixty programmes twenty-eight percent of content related to painting and sculpture, the largest single subject.³⁵ However, analysis of the nature and scope of this coverage is hampered by the lack of a published register of contents for *Monitor*.³⁶ An attempt at such a register, for visual arts coverage, is provided at [Appendix 1](#). This was made possible by the launch, in 2014, of *BBC Genome*, a searchable database of content from the

BBC's *Radio Times* listings magazine. As *Radio Times* entries are not always comprehensive and there are some transcription errors in the *Genome* database, available information from BFI collections and the BBC Written Archive was also used to supplement or correct the data where this was available. ³⁷

Appendix 1 shows all identified content related to contemporary British art.

³⁸ Twenty-five such programmes or programme segments were found, representing approximately a third of the total visual art coverage (based on the number of programme segments; their length is not known). Of the remainder, approximately one half featured historical subjects, often linked to major exhibitions (such as the 8 December 1963 piece on Goya, coinciding with the opening of *Goya and his Times* at the Royal Academy). The rest was dedicated to contemporary overseas artists or thematic essays (such as John Berger on the nude on 12 October 1958). Living British artists also acted as presenters or discussants: most notable was Michael Ayrton, discussed further below, who acted both as the subject and maker of programmes. Richard Hamilton was also prominent, interviewing Jean Tinguely in June 1964 and Marcel Duchamp in June 1962 (the latter programme with contributions from Eduardo Paolozzi).



[Watch Video](#)

Figure 8.

Introduction by Huw Wheldon, *Monitor: Henry Moore*, 1960, documentary television broadcast, 21 minutes. Courtesy of the British Broadcasting Corporation (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00drs8s>).

Jonathan Miller compared Wheldon's approach as principal editor to that of "a middle class, middlebrow artistic big game hunter, who went out on the veldt with a shotgun and Henry Moore fell out of a tree."³⁹ The register at [Appendix 1](#) suggests some truth in this caricature, with features on big game such as Epstein (twice) and Elizabeth Frink as well as Moore ([Fig. 8](#)). However, the programme listing also shows a wider range of subjects and suggests a further influence on content in terms of what Wheldon himself described as trying "to make good television with all that that implies."⁴⁰ In his *Monitor* anthology, Wheldon elaborated on his conception of what makes good arts television. It should have the "nature of parable," presenting something simple and memorable but laying claim to a wider truth, while the physical world shown should "lend intimations" to the subject.⁴¹ Several programme segments are thus anchored by a focus on place: Carel Weight and Ruskin Spear in Hammersmith (28 September 1958); George Chapman in the Rhonda (29 January, 1961, and discussed further below) and Edward Bawden in the contrasting surroundings of rural North West Essex and industrial London (10 November 1963). Character and story are often used to add resonance to the featured art, and the artistic big game often contrasts with a recurring interest in the eccentric amateur. This might be read as a middlebrow (in Jonathan Miller's word, quoted above) taste for whimsy, but equally it seems to have been intended as a provocation to traditional art hierarchies; the two most notable films of this kind were directed by the young iconoclast Ken Russell: "Mr Cheshier's Traction Engines" (1 July 1962) and "The Dotty World of James Lloyd" (5 July 1964). Similarly, there is a repeated interest in the stories of young artists, with an emphasis on lifestyle and a narrative of current struggle and future possibility ("Private View", 8 May 1960, "Pop Goes the Easel", 25 March 1962, and "New Generation 64", 26 April 1964).

Wheldon's conception of good television coverage of visual art met some resistance. This is apparent in a measured critique of the series made by Basil Taylor, himself a substantial television contributor, in a lecture to the Royal Society of Arts also in 1961.⁴² Whilst Taylor praised *Monitor's* output, he nevertheless saw its influence as in part detrimental: "The beginning of *Monitor* in 1958 was an important occurrence ... but valuable and successful as this programme has been, it may be used to illustrate another unfortunate trend."⁴³ Taylor's view was that not only had *Monitor* led to a diminution in the number of freestanding visual arts programmes, but it had also consolidated a tendency, ascribed to Read's earlier films, to treat art as something separate from the everyday flux of events, "something in capital letters".⁴⁴ Taylor's language pushes back at the idea of presenting art as a parable, full of nebulous meaning. Though *Monitor's* items were rapid

responses to current topics, they seemed to Taylor “premeditated” and to subsume art into the show’s own “identity of very high class and sophisticated journalism.” ⁴⁵

Whilst the register of *Monitor* contents at [Appendix 1](#) provides an idea of the scope of coverage of contemporary British art by the series, and some of the principles underlying the selection of topics, a fuller account requires attention to the material itself. This is made difficult, however, by the limited quantity of remaining content. ⁴⁶ Although many programme segments were produced on film, this was not systematically preserved; only films by Ken Russell were retained as a matter of course, by the director himself, leading to a bias towards Russell’s idiosyncratic output in the surviving material. ⁴⁷ [Appendix 1](#) is annotated to show where programme segments related to the visual arts remain accessible for research. ⁴⁸

Though limited, what material remains nevertheless provides rich evidence for how *Monitor* positioned itself within the existing structures of the art support system. In the following sections I look at three of the surviving programmes in detail. “Scottish Painters” and “George Chapman: Painter in Wales” exemplify Wheldon’s idea of the “parable” as a form for *Monitor* coverage and show the consequences of this for how it related to wider critical debate. “Private View” addresses the art market and other aspects of the art support system directly, showing how *Monitor* placed itself in relation to them for the viewing public.

“Scottish Painters”

The eleven-minute “Scottish Painters”, broadcast on the 25 October 1959, was Ken Russell’s fifth film for *Monitor*. He had conceived it as a tribute to its subjects, the painters Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde, whom he had first seen whilst working at a London gallery in the late 1940s. Russell had been seduced by their unconventional pose, describing them as the first real artists he had met. ⁴⁹

Colquhoun and MacBryde had moved to London from Scotland during the War, whilst in their late twenties. ⁵⁰ Though they lived together, their close and complex sexual relationship remained private. The pair frequently exhibited together, starting with their joint show at the Lefevre Gallery in 1944, but also separately, with the more precocious Colquhoun’s first solo exhibition at the Lefevre in 1943. Wartime paintings of ruins, shelters and mysterious meetings led to a critical association with neo-romanticism, then a predominant force through the work of Graham Sutherland and John Piper. However, both artists owed an early debt to Wyndham Lewis’s linear modernism and, in the later 1940s, moved towards cubist-influenced figure

studies (in particular Colquhoun) and still lives (exclusively MacBryde). Cubist ideas came from a familiarity with the leading French figures (the pair had visited Paris in 1938) but also a friendship with the Polish émigré, Jankel Adler, who was their neighbour in the mid-1940s. ⁵¹

“Scottish Painters” is built around the narrative conceit of following a painting by each artist from its beginning to its completion (Figs. 9 and 10). ⁵² In a striking opening section a horse and cart emerges from ripening cornfields into a down-at-heel village (Kersey in Suffolk, where the artists had recently moved) where MacBryde and Colquhoun are disgorged from the back carrying blank canvasses. In a matching closing sequence, the cart, artists and canvasses (implicitly now complete) depart in the hope of finding buyers. As has been noted, Wheldon saw a good television narrative as having the nature of a parable and, with the combination of artistic journey and bucolic scenery, Russell delivers on this formula. The main, middle section of the film shows first MacBryde and then Colquhoun at work in their cottage studio, with these scenes of painting broken up by montages of their past work. There is an attention to technique and the act of physical creation: MacBryde uses newspaper to apply textured paint; Colquhoun applies delicate paint strokes to represent the trimmings of a dress, the camera cutting from his eyes to his brush.



Figure 9.
Robert Colquhoun, Circus Woman, ca.1949, oil on canvas,
104.1 × 79.1 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of
Estate of Robert Colquhoun / Bridgeman Images.



Figure 10.

Robert MacBryde, *Still Life with Melon*, 1959, oil on canvas, 50.8 × 61 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of Estate of Robert MacBryde.

The voice-over commentary follows the same structure. Brief comments from a narrator over the opening and closing sequences are lyrical, emphasising the rural location and the artists' straitened circumstances. The bulk of the commentary, however, gives space for the artists to speak for themselves. Both give cogent, serious descriptions of their interests and approaches. MacBryde is sometimes heavy-handedly fanciful (as in his appreciation of citrus yellows) but also revealing when, for example, he describes painting as problem solving with the artist at risk of "blundering about". Colquhoun talks about nostalgia in his work (a suggestive comment given that he was seen to have broken with neo-romanticism around 1943) and about the painter's potential reliance on repeated "stocks in trade" (again perhaps knowingly, as this was a trait for which he himself faced criticism).⁵³

Viewed now, there is a tension in the tone of the film. It treats the physical act of painting with great seriousness; in this it followed the tradition of the artist biography established by Read in films such as "Henry Moore" (1951) and "Graham Sutherland" (1954) where the creation of a new piece is also central. However, the wider activities and issues surrounding artistic production are either ignored or treated with a belittling humour.

The approach is biographical but that biography is partial, with a restricted view of how commercial and critical realities shape Colquhoun and MacBryde's lives. Whilst we are told that their home was chosen to allow access to London and their dealer, there is no consideration of either painter's artistic career or its necessary engagement with peers, buyers, critics and a world of changing ideas. Colquhoun and MacBryde's careers had, in fact, seen a notable reversal, Colquhoun's in particular. At his solo show in 1943 Colquhoun had been feted as, in the words of Robert Melville in *The Listener*, "the most promising young painter in England".⁵⁴ The height of their joint success came in the late 1940s, including an exhibition in New York in 1948 which was followed by Alfred Barr's purchase of a work by each artist for the Museum of Modern Art. However, as late as 1951, eight years before "Scottish Painters", both featured in *Anthology One*, the principal exhibition of "progressive" painting within the Festival of Britain, and were picked out by Le Roux Smith Le Roux's review in *The Listener* as amongst "the spoilt darlings of present-day British painting."⁵⁵

Whilst the precipitous decline in their critical reputations followed in part from troubled personal lives—in the face of reversals both drank excessively, alcoholism leading to the production of minimal new work in the mid-1950s—it was also closely bound up with some of the major artistic developments, and critical fashions, of the moment.⁵⁶ Colquhoun, in particular, had been a vehicle through which critics had reflected on evolving approaches to contemporary painting. For example, in four essays in the *New Statesman*, published between October 1947 and August 1949, Patrick Heron reviewed Colquhoun's work with varying degrees of enthusiasm but always with particular concern for how effectively Colquhoun had absorbed, and moved beyond, the achievements of cubism. This was at a time when British post-cubism was increasingly out of favour; initially, and for Heron, because of a failure to measure up to the European masters, but increasingly because of a turn against the whole cubist enterprise which, by 1957, David Sylvester was describing as "stale".⁵⁷

With the impact of American abstract expressionism on British artistic debate, starting with the Tate's show *Modern Art in the United States* in 1956, Colquhoun became critically irrelevant.⁵⁸ Patrick Elliott and Adrian Clark observe how Colquhoun's retrospective at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1958, though a moderate success and a brief reminder of former glories, was immediately followed by an exhibition of Alan Davie's ebullient symbolic abstractions. Davie was Colquhoun and MacBryde's near contemporary as a Scottish painter but his work exemplified the new ascendancy of Manhattan and abstract expressionism.⁵⁹

Yet none of this intensely varied career history is acknowledged in “Scottish Painters” and, in particular, the dynamic critical debates which, at least in part, determined the trajectory of Colquhoun and MacBryde’s fortunes is invisible. Colquhoun and MacBryde are presented as aesthetically self-sufficient and their connections to a wider world suppressed. Russell may not have wished to labour their fall from favour, having initiated the approach to them to make the film, but the result is that their difficult circumstances are treated with sentimentality. The mood of the opening and closing sequences is one of amused whimsy, with the rickety cart, set to elegiac music from a brass band, disgorging its eccentric passengers to their tumbledown cottage; in this section the tone is similar to that of Russell’s later piece on the eccentric amateur painter A. W. Chesher. MacBryde himself seems to have seen the film in this way, complaining in a letter to the producer, Peter Norrington, that it made the pair out to be a couple of itinerant bums.⁶⁰

“George Chapman: Painter in Wales”

“George Chapman: Painter in Wales” was first broadcast in January 1961, fifteen months after “Scottish Painters”. The sixteen-minute film shares with the earlier work the device of a journey which both opens and closes the film and establishes the importance of the setting for the rest of the piece. However, the journey itself is distinctly different: rather than being a passenger in an old-fashioned cart, Chapman is at the wheel of his own VW campervan driving through the industrial landscape of the Rhondda valleys. Chapman’s control of his journey provides a visual metaphor for his career; in contrast to Colquhoun and MacBryde, *Monitor* captures him at a moment when his reputation was ascendant, despite earlier struggles. Born in 1908, Chapman had come to painting after working as a commercial artist. He attended the RCA in the late 1930s and in 1951 joined the artistic community in Great Bardfield. It was his trips to the Rhondda from 1953, however, which provided the subject matter for works which established a national profile, with a first one-man show at the Piccadilly Gallery in 1956.⁶¹ A little ahead of the broadcast, in August 1960, his *Rhondda Suite* etchings were displayed at the gallery of their publisher, St George’s Press, whilst Chapman also had an exhibition at the Zwemmer Gallery that year.

“George Chapman: Painter in Wales” was directed by David Jones, a *Monitor* regular since 1958 although still in his twenties.⁶² The film was regarded as particularly successful by Wheldon and others at the BBC, being taken to the Venice Film Festival in July 1961, when it was also repeated for British audiences. The text was anthologised by Wheldon in his *Monitor* collection published in 1962.⁶³ Such enthusiasm is unsurprising, given the way that

the film successfully deploys and develops ideas about how *Monitor* should present its subjects, such as the fable-style narrative, which were endorsed from within the production team.

A voice-over delivered by Chapman provides the commentary to the film; his idiosyncratic delivery (he had been deaf since childhood) adding to its flavour. Although presented as Chapman's own, unmediated narrative, its outline seems to have been informed by Jones' directorial vision: in his initial approach to the artist, on 22 November 1960, Jones suggested three broad themes ("your personal discovery of the Rhondda, your reasons for wanting to paint it, your enthusiasm for the people and the landscape and so on") and these continued to structure the finished work, again bringing biography to the fore.⁶⁴ The picture of Chapman that emerges from the film is of a man consumed by his "discovery" of the Rhondda, and dedicated to his attempt to create "a sort of visual novel of the mining valleys."⁶⁵ We are told about the studio-home he has created from a picturesque former doss-house in Aberaeron, on the mid-Wales coast, and we see him travelling relentlessly between there and his subjects in the Rhondda. However, correspondence between Chapman and Jones shows this to be a partial view that abstracts Chapman from a more varied professional context. The cottage in Aberaeron was itself not Chapman's main home at the time; indeed, during filming, he was in the process of completing a move from Great Bardfield to Hethel, near Norwich. Both Great Bardfield and Hethel gave him access to London, where he held a regular teaching post ("need the money" he says to Jones in an undated letter) as well as taking part in metropolitan cultural life (in a letter to George's wife, the artist Kate Chapman, on 8 December 1960, Jones talks about them all meeting at the Royal Court's production that weekend).⁶⁶ True to Wheldon's ideal of the parable as a form for *Monitor*, Chapman is portrayed as a man who has found success by committing himself to his true vocation, painting the Rhondda; the other entanglements of a personal and professional life are edited out. As with "Scottish Painters", the emphasis is on biography, but it is a partial biography.

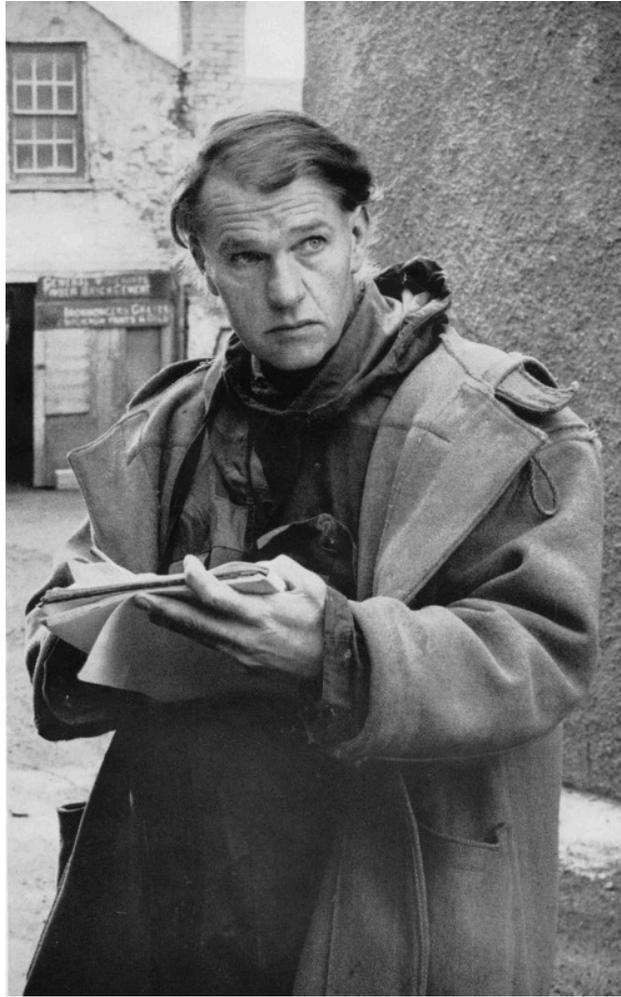


Figure 11.

Unidentified photographer, George Chapman drawing, reproduced in *Monitor: An Anthology* by Huw Wheldon (London: Macdonald & Co., 1962). Digital image courtesy of Huw Wheldon.

The single act of artistic creation, which was placed at the heart of the depiction of Colquhoun and MacBryde, is replaced in “Painter in Wales” by a series of short scenes of Chapman sketching in the Rhondda, whether from the open doors of his van, with a home-made drawing board strung from his neck, or working with clay in his studio (Fig. 11). Nonetheless, the act of making is again given great authority; here an authority over a place and its people. A repeated trope in the film is to dissolve short documentary sequences into Chapman’s representation of the same scene: a face becomes a clay model on which Chapman is working; a mural on a wall becomes the same design in a painting (Fig. 12). In an extension of the idea, a shot of a turning pithead gear dissolves into Chapman’s printing press. Through this editorial process there is an elision between the camera and the artist’s eye, and that perspective is then offered to the viewer, who can thus share something of the artist’s imaginative authority; we look at an everyday

scene and it is transmuted into the permanence of art. It is a technique which flatters the audience, but also avoids any reflection on the relationship between the visiting artist and his rooted subject, straightforwardly affirming the power of art to transform place.



Figure 12.

George Chapman, *God Save The Queen*, 1959, oil on canvas, 95 × 120 cm. Collection of Goldmark Gallery, Uppingham. Digital image courtesy of Goldmark Gallery, Uppingham.

Chapman's commentary, on the other hand, is articulate, reflective and self-aware; it works successfully as an independent text in Wheldon's *Monitor* anthology. It is also more wide-ranging than the commentary of Colquhoun and MacBryde in "Scottish Painters", touching on the vicissitudes of his early career, if never explicitly addressing the commercial realities of succeeding as an artist. In the broadcast Chapman, briefly, even makes his own contribution to debates around relevant modes of modern painting: "Of course narrative painting is supposed to be out of date and very dangerous ground for an Englishman, but so far as I am concerned it gives me an object and a purpose." However, additional material on this topic in Chapman's text was excised from the broadcast, though Wheldon felt able to include it in his published anthology. This significantly extends his passing critical reflection, concluding with an overt critique of the state of abstract painting: "I think that abstract painting has now reached a dead end, that there isn't anything more to be said in that medium. I can only see in abstract painting what I saw thirty years ago in its great days, and I think that a little bit of human interest would do an enormous amount of good. Even Picasso, at times, has told a story, like he did in *Guernica*". As with "Scottish Painters", the editorial

decision to cut this material means that detailed engagement with current critical ideas and disputes is avoided in favour of a biography of the artist as a creative individual. However, and again as with the earlier film, the result is to obscure issues central to that creative life. Whilst Colquhoun and MacBryde had already suffered a reversal in fortunes, Chapman was also to find the commercial environment increasingly difficult as the decade progressed and he retired from professional painting for over a decade from 1969. It was a commercial eclipse which can be ascribed to a critical turn against realist narrative painting and toward abstraction, the very ground that his edited commentary addressed.⁶⁷

Looking across “Scottish Painters” and “Painter in Wales”, a deliberate lack of engagement with—or even acknowledgement of—a wider critical community seems to be a significant strand within *Monitor’s* approach (though limited evidence means generalisation should be cautious). This cannot be ascribed to an institutional bias on the part of the BBC as a whole: in the intense artistic debates of the 1950s it frequently provided platforms for trenchant, independent comment. Le Roux’s largely negative review of the *Anthology* exhibitions (quoted earlier) was initially broadcast on the Third Programme, then reprinted in *The Listener*. In 1951 *The Listener* also published Basil Taylor’s review of *Abstract Painting in England* at the Gimpel Fils galleries, initiating the first round of the “abstraction versus realism” debate, the key critical fissure of the decade, which was largely fought in the magazine’s letters pages.⁶⁸ In addition, *The Listener* had a regular “Round the London Galleries” column which was authored by a roster of significant critical figures who regularly ventured onto disputed terrain: Lawrence Alloway’s punchy critique of those describing John Bratby as a “kitchen-sink” painter being a well-known case in point.⁶⁹ In the preceding decades television too, as noted above, had used debate formats and contentious voices, and linked to material in *The Listener* and on radio.

Disengagement from critical debate thus seems to have been a feature of one particular approach adopted by *Monitor*. Material in the *Monitor* production files supports the conclusion that this was a conscious stance, or at least one preferred by some of its influential staff and programme makers. For example, a memo from John Read, discussing possible content ahead of the first series, proposes a piece on the “neo-realists” represented by the Beaux Arts Gallery and sets out his stall in a way that could equally refer to “Scottish Painters” or “Painter in Wales”: “David Sylvester or John Berger would be suitable to write about their work but I think one would get the best out of this subject by a straightforward film impression of a studio and the artist at work and cutting this to tape recordings . . . I would prefer a documentary treatment without critical comment.”⁷⁰ One determinant of this aversion to critical debate is likely to have been a desire on the part of *Monitor’s* producers to avoid the political, given the BBC’s obligations to

impartiality and the frequently politically-charged nature of criticism (for example, Berger's antipathy to abstraction as lacking class-based social commitment). After the first edition of *Monitor*, item three on the agenda of the production meeting was, "emphasise that the programme must have no politics or current affairs." ⁷¹

However, a further, potentially more important, influence on this a-critical stance was the production team's view of what made good television. The production files show that some senior BBC executives were sceptical about the televisual qualities of visual art in general: Kenneth Adam, the Controller of Programmes wrote in a memo dated 2 February 1958, "On the whole I feel . . . that exhibitions make dull television." ⁷² The *Monitor* team had more faith in their material, but saw a need to present art in a particular way. Above, I traced how Wheldon's ideal of the parable form can be seen in the selection of contemporary art topics and the narrative structure of "Scottish Painters" and "Painter in Wales"; nothing would have been more antithetical to a parable's exalted air and claim to universal meaning than explicit critical commentary or historical contextualisation. More generally, the production files reveal a view that television's strength lay in acting as an extension of the audience's own vision, a neutral channel for experience. The production assistant, Anne James, captured this in a succinct pair of metaphors, "a feature of *Monitor* since its commencement has been the use of the camera as an explorer—a probing eye." ⁷³

"Private View": Representing the Art Support System

Disengagement from critical debate did not mean that *Monitor* avoided difficult ideas. Wheldon's interview with the artist and writer Michael Ayrton (broadcast on 8 October 1961 as "The Myth of Icarus") is replete with Ayrton's multi-layered interpretation of Icarus's fall, seeing this as an archetype of the grand gesture and through it linking the two contemporary technical obsessions of space flight and nuclear holocaust. These ideas are presented, however, as the hard-won creative insights of a practicing artist. Unacknowledged is that Ayrton was also a prominent critic and a *Monitor* insider: an adviser to the production team who went on to make his own films: "The Lost Michelangelo", broadcast on 19 January 1964, and "Minotaur and Oracle", 10 May 1964. This disavowal of the series' relationship to wider art networks is the topic of the rest of this section.

In a change to its standard format, *Monitor's* 8 May 1960 edition comprised a single forty-minute film entitled "Private View", directed by John Schlesinger and with a script by Mitchell Raper. In a further innovation (at least in the *Monitor's* approach to the visual arts) the film took as its overt subject not

the creative individual but the institutional conditions of artistic production; that is, to use the concept introduced earlier, aspects of the art support system (and in this it had an earlier progenitor in Read's "Artists Must Live").

The film retains elements of biography, with a main central section formed from segments on the lives of four young British artists. However, all the material is organised around the question, posed in the broadcast's *Radio Times* listing, "What does it mean to be a young artist trying to break into the art world, to live by painting?" ⁷⁴ Developing the theme, the film presents itself in its opening sequences as an investigation of how an object created "in some obscure moment of pain or exhilaration" becomes that "strange commodity" that is an artefact in the "artistic marketplace." Its main concern is thus with the institutions that most immediately determine artistic value: galleries and their patrons. The title—"Private View"—emphasises that this is a closed, privileged world; one to which the film will give the viewer temporary access. The early working title, "The Art Game", took these connotations further still, suggesting that artistic value lies with the canniness of the players—artists, dealers, buyers—and that the film will reveal their machinations. ⁷⁵ In adopting the stance of a disinterested observer, however, the programme hides the place television had itself taken in the art support system, including its own influence on the art market.

In the film, the four featured artists (Anthony Whishaw, James Howie, Sonia Lawson and Allan Rawlinson) are all shown preparing for their first solo shows, though this common characteristic is revealed only at its end. ⁷⁶ In contrast to "Scottish Painters" the idea of an artistic career is central to "Private View", although here the issue is one of career potential. Nonetheless, the biographical pieces also have much in common with Russell's film. Each artist provides the voice-over for his or her respective segment and is given space to describe their objectives and practice. Again, there is a focus on the work involved in creativity: Howie illustrates how he mixes his own paints; while for each artist the struggle to find a functional studio is made central (epitomised in the image of Rawlinson beating sculptural panels in his parents' back garden).

As with "Scottish Painters" and "Painter in Wales", the concern to engage sympathetically with the artist's standpoint as a practitioner is at the expense of any recognition that the reception of art—and hence an artistic career—is shaped by institutions and ideas. Nor is there acknowledgement of the changing terms of current critical debates. A pre-production synopsis of the film has handwritten annotations which place each artist in a critical category ("expressionistic" against Whishaw (Fig. 13), "neo-abstract" against Lawson (Figs. 14 and 15), "abstract" against Howie and "abstract-copper" against Rawlinson) but even this limited critical vocabulary is excised from

the broadcast film.⁷⁷ The only additional perspective that is, implicitly, invoked is that of a putative everyman, baffled by “modern art”. Both Lawson and Rawlinson respond to questions about the popular reaction to their work. Lawson answers diffidently (“[I] don’t expect people to understand”), while Rawlinson defends his working-class neighbours: “[my] neighbours don’t appreciate precisely what I’m trying to do [but it’s] a beginning. If more modern art is brought to ordinary people [they] will begin to like it”. This question of popular reaction displaces any engagement with the ideas of critics, gallery owners, or patrons.⁷⁸



Figure 13.

Anthony Whishaw, *Corrida*, 1955-6, oil on canvas, 100 × 300 cm.
Collection of Tate (T14296). Digital image courtesy of Anthony Whishaw /
Tate, 2018.



Figure 14.

Sonia Lawson, *Entrance to a Garden*, 1959, oil on canvas, 34 × 25.3 cm. Collection of Royal Academy, of Arts, (03/272). Digital image courtesy of Royal Academy of Arts, London.



Figure 15.

Sonia Lawson, *Still Life*, 1958, oil on hardboard, 121.5 × 71.3 cm. Collection of Royal College of Art (RCA_CC722). Digital image courtesy of Royal College of Art, London.

By excluding the perspectives of those in other components of the art support system, the film's approach to its ostensible theme is limited. In particular, the characterisation of the "artistic marketplace" moves towards caricature. The four artist profiles are framed by opening and closing sequences which dramatise the titular "Private View". The programme thus starts with a close-up of a champagne glass (and an accompanying soundtrack of corks popping) before cutting to a painting's-eye view of ogling buyers. The closing sequence returns to the scene: this time we are in an opulent car, the chauffeur checking his watch while, seen through the gallery window, his employer turns to buying art. The symbolism is clear: we viewers are outside this world of luxury consumption, positioned instead alongside the artist—and the chauffeur—as subjects of a secret operation between the gallery and the buyer; the television camera has given us the opportunity to

peer in, but only to end by emphasising our continued exclusion. This gesture of sympathy with the artist means, however, that the concrete ways in which the market shapes artistic production and careers (and the factors which shape demand in that market) are mystified rather than explored. This was a point felt by at least one contemporary viewer, the poet and critic Hilary Corke, writing *The Listener's* weekly television review and stating bluntly: "why and how had these four, out of so many, been picked by the galleries for promotion? Some answer to this question had been implicitly promised by the terms of reference . . . But of the mysterious leap from private studio to public gallery, nothing." ⁷⁹

In its content and grammar "Private View" thus constructs a position for itself on the outside of art's commercial institutions. However, the production file for the film makes clear both the close relationship between programme makers and their art market colleagues and the extent to which artists and dealers had come to recognise television as itself an agent shaping that market. Potential participants in the programme were nominated by exhibiting institutions (both private galleries and artists' societies, such as the Artists International Association) at the request of the production team, and the shape of the film (including the linking theme of the first solo exhibition and the private view) emerged from these contacts and the suggestions made. Equally the participants themselves recognised the potency of television in creating a market for their work. Ahead of a repeat of the programme in August 1962, one of the artists wrote to the producers asking that a note be included to publicise a forthcoming show at the New Art Centre, London; a request that was refused.

The mutual dependence between artists, commercial galleries and arts television comes across with particular force, however, in archival material on the development of another *Monitor* film, "A Sense of Order", broadcast on 10 November 1963, on the mature artist Edward Bawden. The origins of the piece are in informal contacts between David Jones, for *Monitor*, and the director of the Zwemmer Gallery in London, Michael Chase (and references to meetings in the archived correspondence suggest wide and frequent contact). ⁸⁰ Written notes from Chase in 1962 floated a number of ideas for features on artists connected with Zwemmer, but not, at the start, Bawden; Chase was, in fact, initially keen to follow-up *Monitor's* 1958 piece on John Bratby. However, once the idea for a Bawden film emerged, Chase was explicit that he saw it as a commercial opportunity, writing to Jones on the 18 December 1962 that the timing looked promising given a planned Bawden show in the autumn of the next year and expressing the hope that the broadcast might coincide with it. This was a view echoed by Bawden himself in the summer of 1963, when both filming and the Zwemmer show were delayed but their synchronicity maintained. After the broadcast, Chase

expressed himself very pleased with the resulting interest around the exhibition; in writing a thank you letter to Jones on 17 November, he noted how the visiting public to Zwemmer were all talking about the programme.⁸¹

Conclusion

Whilst television had been affecting attendance at public galleries since at least 1953, the explicit interest in current events embodied in *Monitor's* magazine show format extended the potential for such real-world impacts. The correspondence within the *Monitor* production files shows that by the turn of the 1960s television was a significant player in the promotion of commercial exhibitions and of artists, and one which other institutions, notably commercial galleries, were prepared to court. Television had established itself as an important component of, in Margaret Garlake's phrase, the "art support system", and as such became a necessary part of the social history of post-war British art.

In exercising such market power, television was operating on territory previously occupied largely by print-based critics (who also provided many of the voices to be heard on radio). Yet the evidence of the three *Monitor* programmes considered in this article shows the production team creating programmes which adopt a stance quite different to that of traditional print critics. In these films television positioned itself for the viewer as a fellow outsider to art's institutions and, in particular, to the business of selling pictures. Moreover it acted as a non-combatant in critical debate, even when changing critical ideas were fundamental to understanding the careers of its subjects.⁸² Wheldon's introduction to his *Monitor* anthology, occasional comments in the production files, and the selection of "Painter in Wales" to go to the Venice Film Festival all suggest that the primary motivation for this approach was a particular conception of what made a good presentation of visual art for television (the sense of parable, the presentation of the camera as an extension of the viewer's eye) which picked up on aspects of John Read's television films of the 1950s.

This did not mean that *Monitor* abandoned other previous approaches to visual art on television which were aligned more closely to print and radio precedents. On 3 July 1960, as one example, John Berger and Douglas Cooper presented a programme segment on Picasso, to coincide with a Tate retrospective. As films, the surviving *Monitor* material is likely to under-represent such critic-led programmes, which are more obviously suited to the studio. Nonetheless, the programme listing at [Appendix 1](#) indicates that material such as the three films considered in this article were a core part of *Monitor's* output, a point reinforced by Basil Taylor's criticism of the show,

quoted earlier, where his bracketing of it with Read's films and characterisation of its output as too highly polished suggests just this approach. For Taylor, *Monitor* had cemented a new and unfortunate trend.

In reviewing critical responses to Francis Bacon, David Alan Mellor describes a "promotional culture" which remade the British art scene from the late 1950s. This trend reached maturity, he suggests, in March 1963 with the broadcast of David Sylvester's Third Programme interview with Bacon through which "the age of the artist-celebrity broadcast interview had commenced."⁸³ Whilst the initial Sylvester-Bacon interview was thus transmitted on the radio, the examination of *Monitor* presented here suggests that television, as it extended its audience and its formats, was also a contributor to this remaking of visual art's relationship with the media, with emphasis shifting from openly-argued criticism to a biographical orientation, even as television remained shy about its own impact on art markets and institutions.

Footnotes

- 1 *Panorama* was launched in 1953 and emphasised investigative journalism (though still broadcast, it no longer uses the magazine format); *Tonight* followed in 1957, mixing a range of items from current affairs and science to light-hearted pieces and topical songs.
- 2 BBC Written Archive Centre: *Monitor* General Production File, T32/937, undated. (For BBC Written Archive material used throughout this article, all rights reserved). As it matured *Monitor* experimented with new formats, including single-film programmes such as Ken Russell's dramatised biopic of Elgar and John Schlesinger's *Private View* which is discussed in the article. Whilst producers aspired to a regular time slot as part of the series' identity, this proved difficult to achieve, as witnessed by their increasingly irate notes to senior BBC staff.
- 3 See Tony Currie, *A Concise History of British Television 1930-2000* (Tiverton: Kelly, 2000), 35. Initially this choice was available in London only.
- 4 For the impact of television see David Kynaston, *Family Britain, 1951-57* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 464-65, 670-71.
- 5 "Editorial," the *Burlington Magazine*, 108, no. 755 (Feb. 1966), 57-59. The exhibition of Dutch works was held at the Royal Academy, the Kokoschka show was at the Tate in 1962.
- 6 *Monitor's* run, from 1958 to 1965, straddles the end point of one common demarcation of the post-war period, as stretching from 1945 to 1960; however, as with any periodisation, joints are fuzzy and I use the term as a matter of convenience.
- 7 Mary M. Irwin, "Monitor: the Creation of the Television Arts Documentary," *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 8, no. 3 (2011): 322-336; in particular Irwin uncovers the role of the *Monitor's* intended producer, Catherine Freeman, prior to the recruitment of Wheldon.
- 8 John Walker, *Arts TV: A History of Arts Television in Britain* (London: John Libbey, 1993), 45-50; John Wyver, *Vision On: Film, Television and the Arts in Britain* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 27-31.
- 9 Margaret Garlake, *New Art New World: British Art in Postwar Society* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1998); James Hyman, *The Battle for Realism: Figurative Art in Britain during the Cold War 1945-1960* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2001).
- 10 John Wyver, "The Filmic Fugue of Ken Russell's Pop Goes the Easel," *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 14, no. 4 (2016): 438-451.
- 11 Garlake, *New Art New World*, 4.
- 12 Garlake, *New Art New World*, 10.
- 13 See Garlake, *New Art New World*, 40-41; Hyman, *The Battle for Realism*, 7.
- 14 Pevsner's Reith Lectures are available online from BBC Radio 4 at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00h9llv>.
- 15 For "promotional culture" see David Alan Mellor, "Framing Bacon: Reception and Representation from Little Magazine to TV Screen, 1945-1966" in Ysanne Holt and David Alan Mellor, eds., *Bacon Reframed: A Themed Issue on Francis Bacon* (Taylor & Francis: Abingdon and New York, 2009) (= *Visual Culture in Britain*, 10 (3))
- 16 A history of the visual arts on television before 1962 is given in Wyver, "The Filmic Fugue", 440-443.

- 17 *Radio Times*. Issue 683 (30 Oct. 1936): 89; Issue 703 (19 March 1937): 51.
- 18 *Radio Times*. Issue 697 (8 Feb. 1937): 47; Issue 701 (8 March 1937): 51; Issue 703 (19 March 1937) 50. As a sculptor Lady Kennet is better known as Kathleen Scott. Pearl Binder, who also made a later episode on fashion, was a founder, in 1933, of the left-aligned Artists International Association.
- 19 *Radio Times*. Issue 739 (3 Dec. 1937): 18; Issue 741 (10 Dec. 1937): 21.
- 20 *Radio Times*. Issue 746 (14 Jan. 1938): 17.
- 21 *Radio Times*. Issue 695 (22 Jan. 1937): 49 and Issue 816 (19 May 1939); *The Listener*, Issue 543 (8 June 1939): 1191-95 and 1223. The *Radio Times* synopsis of *Traditional versus Modern Art*, giving a feel for its format, is as follows: "A debate with Sir William Rothenstein in the chair. Examples of the work of Braque, Picasso, Matisse, Cézanne, Paul Nash, McKnight Kauffer, Klee, Dali, and Wadsworth will be shown and compared with pictures painted by Laura Knight, Russell Flint, Lamorna Birch, Frank Brangwyn, Burne-Jones, Alma-Tadema, and Watts, and distinguished artists and critics in the studio will put forward arguments for and against them."
- 22 See John Wyver, "Television," in Chris Stephens and John-Paul Stonard, eds., *Kenneth Clark: Looking for Civilisation* (London: Tate, 2014), 123-131, 126 and 129.
- 23 *Radio Times*. Issue 1458 (24 October 1951): Page 50.
- 24 Wyver, "The Filmic Fugue", 441.
- 25 See *Radio Times*. Issue 1262 (23 Dec. 1947): 34.
- 26 The Art Council co-productions included profiles of Graham Sutherland (1953), Walter Sickert (1954) and John Piper (1955) and the thematic films *Artists Must Live* (1953) and *Black on White* (1954). Arts Council films are available via an .ac.uk domain from <http://artsonfilm.wmin.ac.uk>
- 27 Extracts from John Read's documentary *Henry Moore* are available online from the BBC at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0069slp/clips>.
- 28 For Read's films see Wyver, *Vision On*, 17-23.
- 29 Quoted in Mary M. Irwin, "*Monitor: The Creation of the Television Arts Documentary*," 326. As noted, art exhibitions had been covered previously, but through occasional, ad hoc programming. This gap was also felt by outsiders, Peter Black in the *Daily Mail* wrote after the first programme, "A magazine of the arts fills a vacuum that has existed for too long in television," *Daily Mail*, Issue 19218 (3 Feb. 1958): 10.
- 30 Mary Irwin provides an assessment of Miller's reorientation of *Monitor*; see Irwin, "*Monitor: The Creation of the Television Arts Documentary*," 332-35.
- 31 Clips from Ken Russell's documentaries for *Monitor* are available online from the BFI at <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/1030022/index.html>.
- 32 BBC Written Archive Centre: "Pop Goes the Easel" Production File, T32/1021. Other programme files consulted in this research do not include such a report; the reference to a *Monitor* average "reaction index", however, implies such reports were compiled.
- 33 The report states that the programme received an estimated twenty-six percent of the "Band I" audience. This seems likely to be a socio-demographic stratification, but no definition is given.
- 34 BBC Written Archive Centre: *Monitor* General Production File, T32/937; *Radio Times*. Issue 2072 (29 July 1963): 21; *Daily Mail*, issue 19409 (15 September 1958), no page number.
- 35 See Walker, *Arts TV*, 46. Walker estimates that twenty-one percent of content was given over to theatre, seventeen percent to music, twelve percent to literature, seven percent to ballet and opera and six percent to cinema.
- 36 Irwin refers to a "full programme schedule" for *Monitor* recorded by the production assistant Anne James which is held privately.
- 37 BBC Written Archive Centre: *Monitor* programme index cards; BFI Collections Search, <http://collections-search.bfi.org.uk/web>.
- 38 Defined by the relevant artist(s) having been alive within twelve months of the programme's broadcast. In using "contemporary *British* art" as a category I am not making an argument about an innately national tradition; rather this reflects the historical reality of the 1950s and 1960s in which the social context for the production and reception of art (that is the institutions of the art support system) was organised at the national (and local) level, as was television, delivered through national and regional broadcasters. "Visual art" was a category coming under strain at this period: the impact on classifying *Monitor* content is limited, though I have excluded a short piece on the musician and performance artist Bruce Lacey from 20 May 1962.
- 39 Quoted in Irwin, "*Monitor: the creation of the television arts documentary*," 333.
- 40 Huw Wheldon, *Monitor: An Anthology* (London: Macdonald, 1962), 13.
- 41 Wheldon, *Monitor*, 11.
- 42 *Tempo* was initially edited by Kenneth Tynan. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive listing of programme contents and only very limited *Tempo* material survives (the BFI holds some but none relates to the visual arts; a DVD was produced by Network in 2013 and includes *Painter at Work*, a piece by Peter Newington on Graham Sutherland (8 Apr. 1962) and *The Medium-Sized Cage* created by recent RCA graduates (31 March 1963). For this reason alone, *Tempo* is not considered further here.

- 43 Basil Taylor, "The Presentation of the Visual Arts," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 109, no. 5064 (1961), 942-953, 944.
- 44 Taylor, "Presentation," 949.
- 45 Taylor, "Presentation," 947.
- 46 Irwin, "Monitor: The Creation of the Television Arts Documentary," 322, suggests that just four hours survives from across all *Monitor's* themes, though this may be something of an underestimate.
- 47 On Russell's film preservation see Michael Brooke, "Ken Russell: The *Monitor* Years," BFI Screenonline, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/1030022/index.html>. Wheldon referred to Russell as "the most original, unpredictable mind among us," see Wheldon, *Monitor*, 13. Programme segments not produced on film were broadcast live and not, in general, preserved in recordings.
- 48 Principal research access to BBC film material is via the British Film Institute (BFI) National Film and Television Archive. Thirteen *Monitor* items on the visual arts were identified in the Archive (and forty-seven on other subjects). Six of these are by Russell. One of the Russell films, "Scottish Painters", is considered below. Three are concerned with the artist as amateur (the films on Cheshier and Lloyd and "Always on Sunday" (1965) in which Lloyd stars as Henri Rousseau). A theme of eccentricity also permeates "A House in Battersea" (1961) about an elderly Pre-Raphaelite collector. The final Russell film is the programme-length "Pop Goes the Easel" (1962). Of the seven other programme segments held by the BFI, "Private View" and two pieces featuring Michael Ayrton are discussed below. Two, "The Middle Class Magician" and "Cheese!", are from *Monitor's* final episode in 1965. "A Line on Satire" (1958) is about the art of political cartoons (paralleling John Read's BBC/Arts Council film, "Black on White" from 1954). The historical subject piece *Dürer* is from 1961. A limited and changing set of material, aimed at a broader audience, is on the BBC website under various headings, for example, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00dtyvd/episodes/player>. It is hard to verify the precise scope of surviving material: for example, in August 2015 the BBC made available a *Monitor* film on pop artist Joe Tilson (1964), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02wky7t>, not available via the BFI; a copy of "George Chapman: Painter in Wales" is held by the Fry Art Gallery (purchased from the BBC).
- 49 See Michael Brooke, "Scottish Painters (1959)." At BFI Screenonline, no date, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/935980/index.html>.
- 50 For the biographies of Colquhoun and MacBryde see Patrick Elliott with Adrian Clark and Davy Brown, *The Two Roberts: Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2014), 50-52 (for their personal relationship,) 29 (for their friendship with Adler).
- 51 For the extent and limits of Colquhoun's familiarity with Adler see Adrian Clark, "The Reputation and Achievement of Robert Colquhoun: A Reassessment," *The British Art Journal* 3, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 77.
- 52 That the paintings are complete may be a fiction; the painting Colquhoun is shown working on in the film is identified in Elliott, *The Two Roberts*, 77, as *Circus Woman* (Fig. 9), now in the City Art Centre, Edinburgh and MacBryde's as *Still Life with Melon* (private collection) (Fig. 10).
- 53 See Clark, "The Reputation and Achievement of Robert Colquhoun," 80.
- 54 Quoted in Elliott, *The Two Roberts*, 32.
- 55 Le Roux Smith Le Roux, "Twentyfive Years of British Painting", *The Listener*, issue 1166 (5 July 1951): 17.
- 56 For the impact of alcoholism see Elliott, *The Two Roberts*, 57.
- 57 See Clark, "The reputation and achievement of Robert Colquhoun," 77-78; Sylvester quoted in Hyman, *The Battle for Realism*, 135.
- 58 See John Walker, *Cultural Offensive: America's Impact on British Art since 1945* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 50-53; Clark, "The Reputation and Achievement of Robert Colquhoun," 80.
- 59 See Elliott, *The Two Roberts*, 77.
- 60 BBC Written Archive Centre, "Scottish Painters", T32/959, 3 November 1959.
- 61 See Robert Meyrick, *George Chapman* (Uppingham: Goldmark Gallery, 1992), 10-13.
- 62 By the date of the broadcast, Jones was also producing a play at the Tavistock theatre and this went on to be the core of his career, including a period with the RSC in the 1970s.
- 63 Wheldon also showed a continuing commitment to Chapman's work, opening a one-man show at the Reynolds Gallery, Plymouth in 1981, after a lengthy hiatus in Chapman's artistic career (see the obituary by Robert Meyrick, reprinted in University of Aberystwyth, School of Art Collections, on-line catalogue: <http://museum.aber.ac.uk/collections-artistcollections-georgechapman-obituary.php>).
- 64 BBC Written Archive Centre, "George Chapman", T32/991, 22 November 1960.
- 65 Wheldon, *Monitor*, 170.
- 66 BBC Written Archive Centre, "George Chapman", T32/991, 8 December 1960.
- 67 Meyrick, *George Chapman*, 18-19. There is no direct evidence for why material was edited out of the broadcast, but it is striking that almost half the excised commentary relates to critical debates, and this removed the majority of such material; at the least a decision was made to remove content that might, from a different perspective, be considered amongst the most interesting.
- 68 See Garlake, *New Art New World*, 40; round two was largely fought out through the *New Statesman*.

- 69 Lawrence Alloway, "Round the London Galleries", *The Listener*, issue 1486 (19 Sept. 1957): 427. As noted earlier, gallery round-ups had also been a feature of television, but had disappeared by the 1960s; in 1966, in an evaluation of the state of television's visual arts coverage, Michael Billington's primary complaint was the absence of just such a critical round-up of new exhibitions; "Art on Television", the *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 108 no. 762 (Sept. 1966): 490.
- 70 Dated 20 Jan. 1958; BBC Written Archive Centre, *Monitor* General Production File, T32/937. Both Sylvester and Berger were active participants in the "abstract versus realism" debate; making their rejection from the proposal a clear turn away from live contemporary concerns. Read is, however, a sophisticated voice and also proposed a regular staged confrontation between critics: a "what the critics say" along the lines of "what the papers say"; this idea was not pursued.
- 71 BBC Written Archive Centre, *Monitor* General Production File, T32/937; item one for the meeting was "Huw Wheldon's suit." It is also possible that the principal concern for the *Monitor* team was avoiding the current affairs territory of *Panorama* and *Tonight*.
- 72 BBC Written Archive Centre, *Monitor* General Production File, T32/937, note dated 20 Feb. 1958.
- 73 BBC Written Archive Centre: *Monitor* General Production File, T32/937, undated.
- 74 See Appendix 1.
- 75 BBC Written Archive Centre, "Private View", T32/971, undated.
- 76 Of the four, Wishaw and Lawson went on to have successful art careers, being elected as full Royal Academicians in 1989 and 1991 respectively. Howie too continued as a professional painter until his death in 2011 (see *The Scotsman*, 4 Aug. 2011, <http://www.scotsman.com/news/obituaries/obituary-james-howie-painter-and-dancer-1-1777965>). I have found no further evidence of Rawlinson's career.
- 77 BBC Written Archive Centre, "Private View", T32/971, undated.
- 78 A concern over popular reaction is prominent in Wheldon's introduction to programme segments; for example, he prefaces a 1958 piece on John Bratby, "This is a painting by John Bratby. It hangs in the Tate Gallery, where there are several more of his paintings, paid for, of course, as usual, by you and me. . . . Some people think that he's marvellous, others think he's wasting his time and ours." (BBC Written Archive Centre: *Monitor* scripts (introductions), 16 March 1958).
- 79 Hilary Corke, "Critic on the Hearth: Orthodox Heretics", *The Listener*, issue 1625 (16 May 1960): 898.
- 80 BBC Written Archive Centre, "A Sense of Order", T32/1057.
- 81 BBC Written Archive Centre, "A Sense of Order", T32/1057, 17 November 1963. David Jones' letters following "Painter in Wales" also make jocular reference to the commercial benefits of the programme; writing to Kate Chapman on 12 June 1961 he says, in the context of its showing at Venice, "let's hope lots of rich Italians start writing to George for pictures when they've seen it" (BBC Written Archive Centre, "George Chapman", T32/991, 12 June 1961).
- 82 This absence of engagement with contemporary critical debate might also account for the lack of attention paid to television in the existing art history of the period, which has often been focussed on that debate.
- 83 Mellor, "Framing Bacon", 232. Their first televised encounter was "Fragments of a Portrait", directed by Michael Gill and broadcast on 18 Sept. 1966.

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