MR EDDIE BERG:

Thank you. My name is Eddie Berg. I'm currently the artistic
director of the British Film Institute and I run the National
Film Theatre on London's South Bank and I'm developing a brand
new project for the British Film Institute which is scheduled
to be ready by 2012, and I'll talk a little bit about that
at the end, but I'm principally going to talk about FACT, the
Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, which is the
organisation that I founded in 1988 and has developed since
into a major centre for film, video and new media.

When Rafael was talking about individual practice and the role
of -- the ideas and the role of the artist in putting together
very ambitious new media projects, I'm going to talk more from
the position of an institution and the role of a producer of
projects and what that means, and I'm also going to try and
situate this within the contexts of emerging policy in terms
of funding, the relationship between different kinds of
institutions and how that's, in a way, informed and influenced
practice around the world.

As I said, I'm going to talk about FACT. I'm going to talk
about how it was set up, but I'm going to talk very briefly
about Liverpool, because that's where FACT is, and I just want
to give you a minute or two on Liverpool, because it is kind
of important to understand the place where you're setting
something up. Liverpool is kind of a pretty unique place in
Britain. It is very, very un-English city. It sees itself
more as a city State, like Hong Kong, I guess. It is something
-- it's got very particular characteristics as a city. It
doesn't really see itself as part of a national identity. It
sees itself more like the noir or oppressed side of national
culture, and it gives the place a very particular character.

Now, Liverpool is kind of famous for its relationship to the
sea. It's obviously got a major maritime history. It's also
got some very old, well-established, minority communities,
ethnic communities, oldest Chinese settlement in Western

Europe is in Liverpool. There's an active, but not very large,
China Town. There is the oldest -- some of the oldest West
African communities in the city. It has two cathedrals. In
Britain you just have one cathedral. Liverpool did two, for
some reason, you know, a kind of Protestant one and a Catholic
one. This is the Protestant one designed by Giles Gilbert
Scott, who also designed the red telephone boxes, which you
probably know very well. He was 24 when he designed it.
That's scary, isn't it? But this is even scarier, because this
is what the city looked like, which is that -- it looks much
less like it now, I took this photo about six years ago --
this is large tracts of the city centre were derelict, run
down, people had moved out. In 1930 Liverpool had a population
of 1 million. This year it has a population of 460,000, so
you can see what impact that has on a city.

The point of kind of change in cultural terms came, I think,
significantly when Tate Liverpool opened in 1988 and that was
the year that I set up Moviola, and I set up Moviola really
because there was no -- because I was really interested in
the idea of artists working with film and video, but there
was very little practice in the city, but I was totally into
the idea of creating a conversation between audiences and
artists that didn't seem to exist in the city. So I just
started off like a lot of people do, working on my own, then
with a few friends, setting up a series of screenings, doing
everything from sort of Art House cinema through to trying
to stage installation projects, but in a very small scale
hand-to-mouth kind of way. The first thing that I really was
able to put together of any kind of stature was in 1989, and
I'm going to run through the FACT story chronologically here,
because it is important in terms of trying to tell a wider
story about media art in Britain, but the kind of initial
platform for creating a much more kind of meaningful
conversation between audiences and an artist was the creation
of Video Positive.

The first time it was staged in 1989, only ten months after
Tate Liverpool opened, and I managed to persuade the then

curator of Tate Liverpool -- director of Tate Liverpool, Richard Francis -- to help be part of the project. He took a big chance on it. It was really successful. It was very, very challenging technologically, but we had for the first time -- the whole of Tate itself -- for the first time engaged in a media art project of some scale.

By 1990 the organisation, which was very fragile, like a lot of these projects, was beginning to consolidate. There were, I think, about three or four of us then working full-time on the Video Positive project and starting to do all the projects as well. In 1990 we set up a part of Moviola that has now become a major part of FACT. It is called the Collaboration Program in which artists -- we were setting up contexts in which artists were working collaboratively with communities, trying to create projects, installation projects, wider kind of projects which engaged non-artists in the creation of the work. Not quite in the way in which Rafael was talking about it, which is talking about public engagement in a very direct participatory way, but this is much more, kind of, rooted in the idea of developing inherent creativity of individuals and a belief that that is a very important potential of media art to do that.

So by 1991 Video Positive had really consolidated, and whereas Video Positive '89 largely consisted of installation projects by British artists, Video Positive '91 had artists from across the world and we staged about 20 installations across five venues. In many ways Video Positive '91 was my favourite festival because it was a really interesting turning point in terms of exhibition technology. It was a moment in which exhibition technologies were beginning to really atomise and which it was beginning to be possible for artists to work in other ways spatially with technologies that they hadn't been able to explore to any kind of great degree previously, and this was being witnessed within various works which were staged at Video Positive '91.

Now, the issue of technological support for any artist here

or any artist anywhere, especially artists working at this time, the issues of technological support in the presentation of the work were really significant. You know, if you were an artist and you wanted to stage a full-screen installation, let's say four-projector installation in 1992, nearly all of the costs would go on equipment. Rafael talked about the major cost of Body Movies being equipment. It is still the same story. It is just back then it was so much more difficult to get the equipment, even commercially, and it was so much more expensive to hire that equipment than it is now, proportionately.

Also the issues of reliability of that equipment were huge for exhibitors. Most exhibitors were a bit -- I would say a little bit hostile -- towards artists who were working with media forms. There was always this view that things would break down, things would never sustain, so it was always an enormous challenge to stage the work. So FACT, as it became, were able to establish infrastructural support for artists nationally and exhibitors nationally, initially securing enough money to buy equipment, projectors, playback equipment, sound equipment and so on that could be hired by artists and exhibitors at a fraction of the commercial price, so this is subsidised but hired at the fraction of the commercial price, about one tenth of the commercial price for hire. That in itself began to create a much more developed network of opportunities for exhibitors and artists. It has meant that there was backup all the time for artists wherever they were in the country.

By 1993 the Video Positive festival developed even further. By then it was staged across six venues including the Tate. I think there were about 25 installations presented of varying scales. Then in 1994 there were a couple of things happened that were very important. We staged a show which toured the UK, which I think is one of the most ambitious projects I've ever been involved with. It's called V-Topia -- Visions of a Virtual World. The first attempt to do a large scale touring exhibition entirely composed of interactive works, and this

was a hugely ambitious project that toured to about six venues around the UK.

The other thing that I think was very important in terms of infrastructural support and led to developments for institutions and for artists in the UK was the creation of the National Lottery in Britain in 1994. One of the five good causes of the National Lottery in Britain were the Arts, so 20 per cent of the National Lottery investment went to the Arts, then it began a new wave of building developments and of infrastructural developments within the UK.

By the time that Video Positive '95 was launched, I'd begun the process of working on what would become the FACT centre which was kind of initially writing a document to the Arts funding bodies and to government funding bodies, which was about the possibility of the centre, which I'll talk about more in terms -- but this was just an indication of how long it takes to go from concept to actuality.

In 1996 Moviola continued to develop projects but we changed our name then to FACT, to the Foundation of Arts and Creative Technology, and in '97 we staged Video Positive in both Liverpool and Manchester. Liverpool and Manchester are 30 miles apart, but they are cities with incredible historical rivalry, totally different accents. We may as well be in two different parts of the world. The two football teams, for those of you who follow football, Manchester United, Liverpool, they hate each other, really, with a passion, so it is -- these are cities that very seldom collaborated in any sense at all, and so this is one of the first major cultural collaborations between the two cities.

The other thing that happened in '97 nationally, I think, that was important, was The Look Centre opened, and The Look Centre brought together the London Film Makers Co-op and London Video Arts. Now, respectively London Film Makers Co-op were the major body in Britain for collecting and distributing experimental film, and London Video Arts were the major body

in terms of collecting and distributing and exhibiting video
art, or largely single channel, single screen video art in
the UK, so those two organisations came together to create
a single organisational body, and what brought really the
first centre for media art in Britain of any scale, and that
opened in Hockston in 1997. It closed in 2001. There is a
completely different story to be told about what happened
there, but it's an example of how not to do something, and
if we had more time I could talk to you about the lessons to
be learnt from that. But certainly FACT learned a few lessons
from that story.

I just want to go back to 1998. We did the International
Symposium on Electronic Art in both Liverpool and Manchester,
further bonding those two cities with historical rivalries
in one giant cultural celebration. But this was the largest
-- I think it's the largest ever -- electronic arts event to
happen in Britain. It brought together 25 different venues
across the two cities, about 100 different projects which
ranged from installation to interdisciplinary, to
performance-based, to networked projects. I mean, it really
was a phenomenal undertaking and I think one of the most
ambitious cultural projects ever staged in the UK.

In 1991 pretty much all of the funding had been raised for
the FACT Centre, about ten million pounds, which would be about
18 million US dollars, and a site was secured in Liverpool
City Centre, and it was also the launch of Liverpool Biennial.
The last Video Positive was staged in 2000. It was a conscious
decision to not do Video Positive any more. We felt that the
creation of the FACT Centre in a way was about developing an
all-year-round festival and the festival was a platform to
achieve certain ambitions, to be able to develop a
relationship between audiences, locally, nationally and
internationally with artist practice, but also with the place,
with Liverpool, and we'd achieved that in many ways, and it
was very important to think in a different way, to create a
different paradigm and relationship between those -- and sets

of conversations between those different constituencies.

A very important project was launched in 2000, though. We
worked with the Danish artist Superflex, who created this
Super Channel Project around the world, which is really a way
of bringing together different communities to establish a
broadcasting model to talk -- to talk to different communities
around the world, but working with artists, often working with
artists to create content for it.

We established a project in Liverpool which is sustained all
the way through, in fact has grown and grown. It is called
Tenant Spin. Now, it is one -- probably the major Super
Channel Project that's been developed since the inception of
Super Channel Projects and I think it is a very, very
interesting cultural model, it mostly involves people who are
over 60, who are developing all of the content, editing the
content. One of the key people in this project, one of the
key producers of material, the person who is responsible for
most of the post-production is a woman called Kath Healy who
is 82. She is now -- she only learnt to edit on Final Court
Pro on Mac at the age of 78, but she is an astonishing example
of the way in which artists and communities working together
can generate something which is quite unique.

In 2001 -- we'd staged a large number of projects again in
2001, continued to work on individual projects, commissioning
artists' work, and I think this is a very important feature
of the FACT story. FACT over time has commissioned probably
250, 300 artists' works, most of them installation projects
or expanded projects or projects for public spaces, a huge
amount of work, you know, a huge investment in artists from
around the world, but also a huge investment in the
infrastructure to be able to deliver those projects.

In 2002 FACT was, myself and a colleague from FACT were part
of the curatorial team working on the Liverpool Biennial. The
Liverpool Biennial -- this was the second staging of the
Liverpool Biennial -- it featured many media art projects.

This is not one of them, actually, the one that you're looking at, but it was a very fascinating project. It was a public art project. Actually I worked on -- it's with Tasro Nashino -- it was a project in which a hotel, single room suite hotel, was created around a public monument and the monument was Queen Victoria, so basically when you slept in the room, and the room was about as big as this lecture theatre, actually in the middle of the room was this giant, oversized monument of Queen Victoria, so you were kind of sleeping with the dead in this installation, and it was one of the most affecting works I've ever experienced.

So the following year, 2003, is when FACT opened, and FACT Centre is a pretty big building. It's 4,000 square metres of building. It's got three cinemas, two galleries, it's got a flexible space called The Box which can function as both a cinema and performance space. It can also be a gallery space, media lounge which is dedicated to artists' works in new media, especially networked projects. We have a media lab which is used to support artists' practice, a number of production spaces for artists.

FACT does DVD production as well, and continues to provide infrastructural support in terms of equipment and resources. So, for instance, FACT, or rather Mike's at FACT, probably has something like 60 or 70 projectors which you can hire. It will have a whole range of playback equipment, control equipment, computer control equipment. Now, there are kind of high-definition cameras you can hire, plus high-definition projectors. There is phenomenal support for the UK cultural infrastructure there, plus the Collaboration Program and all of the social spaces, so you get a glimpse of the interior of the building, a few people having a drink, socialising, you know the usual thing you do at cultural events from time to time.

Here's a few examples of installation projects. This is Isaac Julian's Baltimore which features the actor Melvin van Peebles, who some of you might know. He made the iconic first

blacks-ploitation movie Sweet Sweetback's Bad Ass song, made in 1971, a very politicised film, which actually set the tone for a whole number of other films which were made after. Isaac Julian makes expanded cinema work and this was a large scale project in a space which was 200 square metre-plus.

Another set of images from Isaac's work. I'm just going to quickly give you some examples of projects. This is a project called Kingdom of Piracy which was put together by Shu Li Chang, featured lots of different artist's projects. The New York artists Jennifer and Kevin McCoy here, who create miniature sets, miniature film sets with robotic cameras, so what you're seeing in the end -- in the projection right at the end -- there is an image from one of the tables, as it were, but the whole robotic camera infrastructure creates lots of edit decisions, so although you're looking at seven different sets it creates a single movie out of those seven different sets. This is Nick in the Never by Marina Zircow, who works with flash animation. Some of you might know Brain Girl. It is a very famous on-line project that Marina Zircow developed in 2002 which became a sort of a huge -- gathered a huge following internationally -- so this was her first installation project entirely based on -- entirely using flash animation techniques.

This is the Dutch internet arts pioneers, Jodie, who completely trashed the MacIntosh desktop and mashed it up in a completely fascinating way, and this was an expanded work by them. This is Kath Healy on the left, the woman I'm talking about who is currently 82 and is a bit of a genius, and is an example again of working with individuals and developing the creativity.

So FACT has been opened since 2003. In the first three years there were 1.4 million visitors to FACT, which is, I think, pretty extraordinary, much higher than was anticipated. It is now one of the most highest-funded, not only media arts organisations, but one of the highest-funded visual arts -- if you position it within a sort of a visual culture -- visual

arts organisations in the UK, commissioning ten or 15 projects a year and with up to 500 unique projects over the course of the year.

So I'm just going to say very briefly now something about what I'm working on currently and in the future. In early 2006 last year I moved from FACT to the British Film Institute. The British Film Institute is a very old organisation, unlike FACT. It was set up in 1933 by Royal Charter, so it's a very different kind of organisation, whereas FACT is an independent organisation, grown organically, bottom up, and became a major part of the cultural landscape of the UK. The BFI has been a major part of the landscape of the UK for a very long time and runs different components including the London Film Festival, the National Film and Moving Image Archive with 900,000 titles in it, it publishes sight and sound, books, DVDs, with 30 or 40 DVDs a year. You know, major publishing house.

I'm responsible for developing the current extension to the National Film Theatre which will include the developments of spaces for artist film and video for new media practice, as well as developing other ways and other mechanisms to deliver content from the collections.

This is the building that's been developed at the moment, or an impression of the building that's being developed at the moment, and it's located right on the South Bank and it's quite -- between the National Theatre and the Royal Festival Hall there -- great location, right on the Thames. This is a space that's been designed by the British architect, David Adgvey. It's a creation of the Media Tech in the BFI South Bank space in which we're creating a space which will enable up to about 30 users to look at thousands of titles at any one time, and the reasons why we're creating this, rather than providing it on-line, are to do with rights issues. There is -- with a lot of material that we're working with there are rights issues about making it available at a cost, so it has to be made available for free, and it's also about creating an

experience in which you might be able to engage with the work in a different way that you would in an on-line environment.

And this is a sort of interior shot of the space. This is just a short-term development and actually what were -- the other project I'm working on is actually on another site on the South Bank, and I'm working on what will be a major national centre for film and moving image culture which will hopefully be ready for 2012 when London stages the Olympics. That project is just beginning now. We're in the process of beginning to raise the funds for the project. We have the architects on board and we're getting into the design process.

So it's a very exciting project. I think it is going to bring together different histories and traditions, around cinema, around moving image cultural practice, around artist film and video and around new media into a single space, and I hope that we're going to be able to deliver the project by 2012 and there is going to be something that will, I think, create a new space for the possibilities of sharing and looking at those different histories and traditions.

So I just want to say thank you again for inviting me here, for allowing me to present and to interview Rafael, not really interview him, but to kind of, you know, try to moderate his presentation, and to thank the Hong Kong Arts Development Council again for inviting me, Ellen and the Home Affairs Bureau, and I look forward to talking to you more as the discussion unfolds today. Thank you.