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Jaime Davidovich papers: Clippings, circa 1970-1986

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ART

A Trip Into Space

The artistic career of Jaime Davidovich is representative of the over-all change (and controversy) in visual art today. He studied art in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he was born, and in Brazil. The artists he admired most were those reducing painting to subtle essential elements: Newman, Rothko and Reinhardt. After coming to the U.S. in 1963, he lived in New York City for five years before coming to Cleveland. Working for a time with color field painting, Davidovich arrived by stages at his present investigations of space. "Space not ordinarily used for art purposes," he says.

En route to this particular idea he eliminated color to produce white paintings. The process of painting, the act of putting on the pigment, became uppermost as he abandoned the traditional final product or end result. Next he threw away the stretchers, or as he says "the furniture," overboard.

Then his canvases were taped to the walls where they were installed. The coup de grace to traditional painting was delivered when he severed his relationship with canvas and took to using just the tapes. Without the canvas or the stretcher bars on which it used to be stretched the artist was left with the environment.

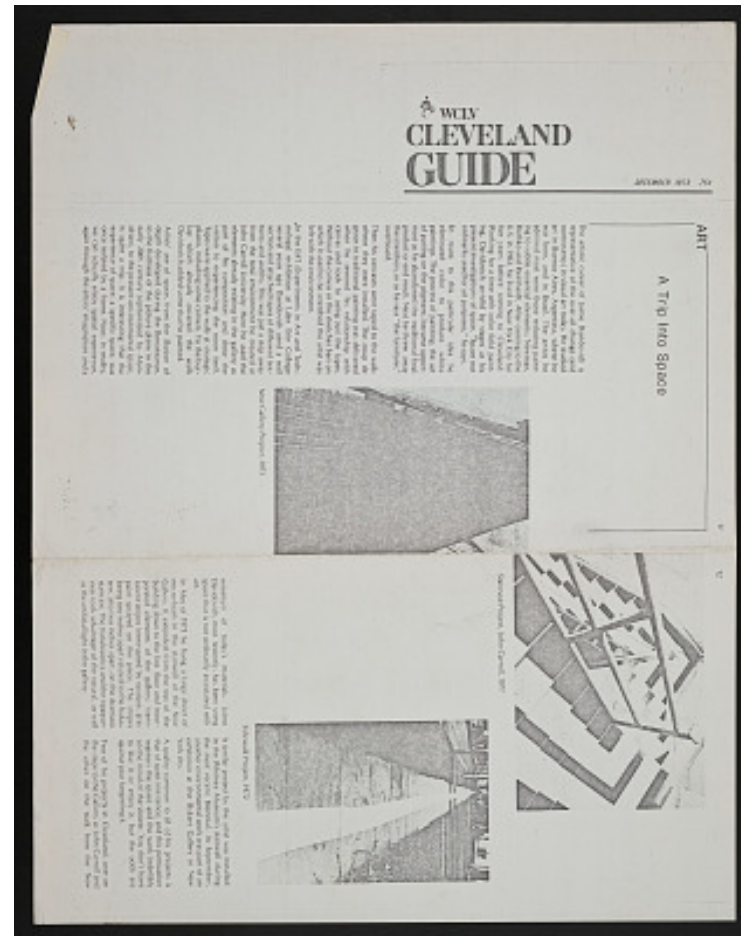
In the EAT (Experiments in Art and Technology) exhibition at Lake Erie College several years ago Davidovich used a wall section and attached tapes of different textures and widths. This was just a step away from the total environment he created at John Carroll University. Here he used the elements already existing in the gallery as part of his composition and drew the visitors to experiencing the room itself. Tapes were applied to the walls at strategic places, including some corners. To the burlap which already covered the walls Davidovich added some that he painted.

Artists' use of space, from the illusion of depth developed during the Renaissance, to the flatness of the picture on the plane in the early 20th century (epitomized by Mondrian), to the present environmental space, is quite a trip. It is interesting that the experience of space, a specific space, was once isolated by a frame. Now, in reality, we can actually enjoy spatial existence, again through the artists' imagination and a

[[image]]
New Gallery Project, 1973

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[[image]]
Staircase Project, John Carroll, 1971



[[image]]
Sidewalk Project, 1972

minimum of today's materials. Jaime Davidovich, most recently, has been using space that is not ordinarily associated with art.

In May of 1973 he hung a large sheet of micro-foam in the stairwell of the New Gallery. It extended from the top of the building down to the first floor and incorporated elements of the gallery: translucent stripes interrupted by opaque, gray paint sprayed on the piece. The stripes being two inches apart related to the balusters, also two inches apart, on the dramatic staircase. The translucency and the opaqueness took advantage of the natural as well as the artificial light in the gallery.

A similar project by the artist was installed in the Whitney Museum's stairwell during the most recent Biennial. In September, another environmental work was part of an exhibition at the Bykert Gallery in New York city.

A quality common to all of his projects is that of quiet insistence, and this persuasion registers the space and the work indelibly on the mind of the viewer. You don't have to like it or enjoy it, but the odds are against your forgetting it.

Two of his projects in Cleveland, one on the steps to the Gallery at John Carroll and the other on the walk from the New

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