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Archives of American Art

Jaime Davidovich papers: Clippings, circa 1970-1986

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[[image]]
ect, 1973, cloth tape.

space. On the other section, he used a 15" white paper tape cut at each seam line to emphasize the positive space of the walk. The work lasted approximately a year, during which time the pristine geometry and color underwent constant change from human use and the weather. In the 1973 Whitney Biennial, Davidovich's penchant for exploring the possibilities of wasted space, and more importantly, space where the viewer does not expect art to be found, led him to work with the museum's staircase well, a space 40' high, 18' wide, and 5' deep. Here Davidovich applied 5" cloth tapes

973, clear vinyl tape., 10'x 60'.
[[image]]

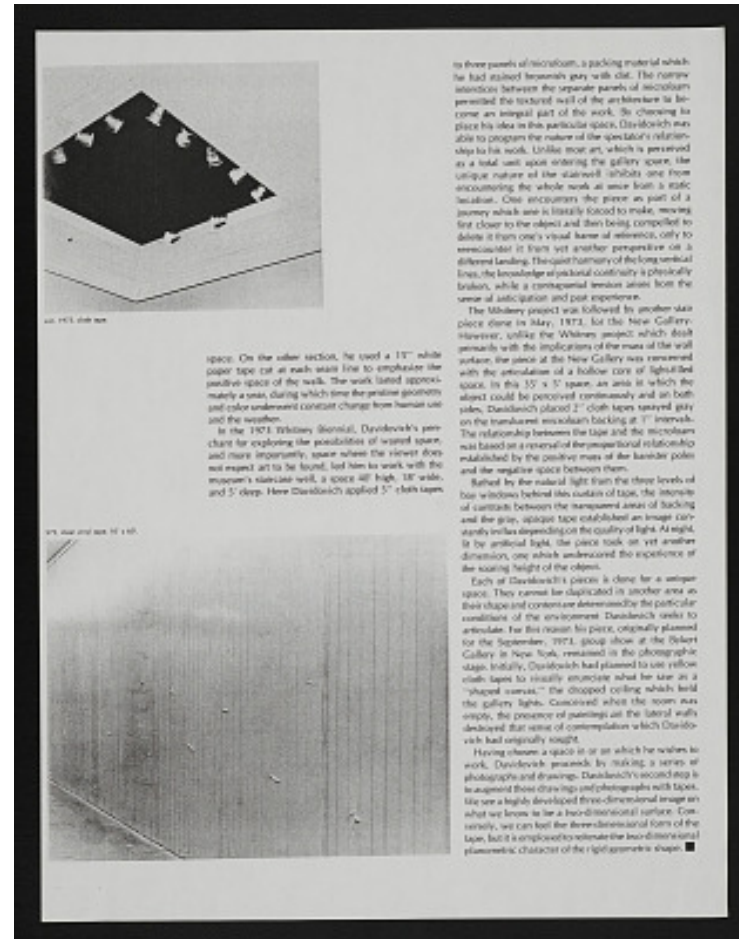
to three panels of microform, a packing material which he had stained brownish gray with dirt. The narrow interstices between the separate panels of microform permitted the textured wall of the architecture to become an integral part of the work. By choosing to place his idea in this particular space, Davidovich was able to program the nature of the spectator's relationship to his work. Unlike most art, which is perceived as a total unit upon entering the gallery space, the unique nature of the stairwell inhibits one from encountering the whole work at once from a static location. One encounters the piece as part of a journey which one is literally forced to make, moving first closer to the object and then being compelled to delete it from one's visual frame to reference only to encounter it from yet another perspective on a different landing. The quiet harmony of the long vertical lines, the knowledge of pictorial continuity is physically broken, while a contrapuntal tension arises from the sense of anticipation and past experience.

The Whitney project was followed by another stair piece done in May, 1973, for the New Gallery. However, unlike the Whitney project which dealt primarily with the implications of the mass of the wall surface, the piece at the New Gallery was concerned with the articulation of a hollow core of light-filled space. In this 35'x 5' space, an area in which the object could be perceived continuously and on both sides, Davidovich placed 2" cloth tapes sprayed gray on the translucent microform backing at 1" intervals. The relationship between the tape and the microform was based on a reversal of the proportional relationship established by the positive mass of the banister poles and the negative space between them.

Bathed by the natural light from the three levels of bay windows behind this curtain of tape, the intensity of contrasts between the transparent areas of backing and the gray, opaque tape established an image constantly in flux depending on the quality of light. At night, lit by artificial light, the piece took on yet another dimension, one which underscored the experience of the soaring height of the object.

Each of Davidovich's pieces is done for a unique space. They cannot be duplicated in another area as their shape and content are determined by the particular conditions of the environment Davidovich seeks to articulate. For this reason his piece, originally planned for the September, 1973, group show at the Bykert Gallery in New York, remained in the photographic stage. Initially, Davidovich had planned to use yellow cloth tapes to visually enunciate what he saw as a "shaped canvas," the dropped ceiling which held the gallery lights. Conceived when the room was empty, the presence of paintings on the lateral walls destroyed that sense of contemplation which Davidovich had originally sought.

Having chosen a space in or on which he wishes to work, Davidovich



proceeds by making a series of photographs and drawings. Davidovich's second step is to augment these drawings and photographs with tapes. We see a highly developed three-dimensional images on what we know to be a two-dimensional form of the tape, but it is employed to reiterate the two-dimensional planometric character of the rigid geometric shape.

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