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Jaime Davidovich papers: Clippings, circa 1970-1986

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The Trib, New York - Wednesday, April 5, 1978

ARTISTS' TV - A 'Variety Show For The Avant-Garde'

By Gerald Marzorati

"This is really a different kind of television," video artist Jaime Davidovich offers as he pads across his loft to fetch a stack of video cassettes. "We're not like commercial television and we're not like public television." He returns, props a TV cassette into his video playback machine and slowly backs away from his de rigueur Sony TV set as the words "SoHo Television" - accompanied by a flourish of electronic music - come into focus on the screen. "This," Davidovich affirms, "is artists' television."

And if you are among the 250,000 city dwellers plugged into Manhattan Cable, you too can affirm the existence of artists' TV by flicking the dial to Teleprompter Channel 10 at 9 for the next dozen Monday evenings of SoHo TV. A project of the Artists Television Network (the committee of downtown video art groups formed as Cable SoHo two years ago to encourage originating as well as receiving cable programs). SoHo TV plans to pit the likes of John Cage, Nan June Paik and other downtown denizens against such Monday night prime-time stalwarts as Cher, Merv Griffin and the M.A.S.H. crew.

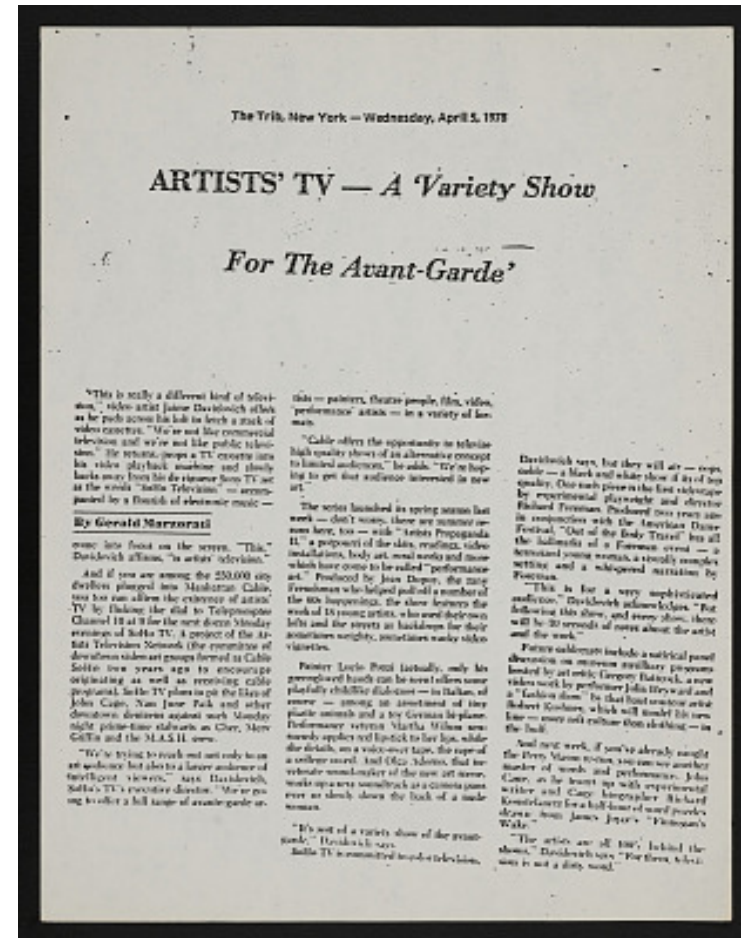
"We're trying to reach out not only to an art audience but also to a larger audience of intelligent viewers," says Davidovich, SoHo's TV's executive director. "We're going to offer a full range of avant-garde artists - painters, theatre people, film, video, 'performance' artists - in a variety of formats."

"Cable offers the opportunity to televise high quality shows of an alternative concept to limited audiences," he adds. "We're hoping to get that audience interested in new art."

The series launched its spring season last week - don't worry, there are summer reruns here, too - with "Artists Propaganda II," a potpourri of the skits, readings, video installations, body art, rural works and more which have come to be called "performance art." Produced by Jean Dupuy, the zany Frenchman who helped pull off a number of the 60s happenings, the show features the work of 18 young artists, who used their own lofts and the streets as backdrops for their sometimes weighty, sometimes wacky video vignettes.

Painter Lucio Pozzi (actually, only his greengloved hands can be seen) offers some playfully childlike dialogues - in Italian, of course - among an assortment of tiny plastic animals and a toy German bi-plane. Performance veteran Martha Wilson sensuously applies red lipstick to her lips, while she details, on a voice-over tape, the rape of a college co-ed. And Olga Adorno, that inveterate sound-maker of the new art scene, works up a sexy soundtrack as a camera pans every so slowly down the back of a nude woman.

"It's sort of a variety show of the avant-garde," Davidovich says.



SoHo TV is committed to color television, Davidovich says, but they will air - oops, cable - a black and white show if its of top quality. One such piece is the first videotape by experimental playwright and director Richard Foreman. Produced two years ago in conjunction with the American Dance Festival, "Out of the Body Travel" has all the hallmarks of a Foreman event - a terrorized young woman, a visually complex setting and a whispered narration by Foreman.

"This is for a very sophisticated audience," Davidovich acknowledges. "But following this show, and every show, there will be 30 seconds of notes about the artist and the work."

Future cablecasts include a satirical panel discussion on museum auxilliary programs hosted by art critic Gregory Battcock, a new video work by performer Julia Heyward and a "fashion show" by that haut couteur artis Robert Kushner, which will model is new line - more soft culture than clothing - in the buff.

And next week, if you've already caught the Perry Mason re-run, you can see another master of words and performance, John Cage, as he teams up with experimental writer and Cage biographer Richard Konstanetz for a half-hour or word puzzles drawn from James Joyce's "Finnegan's Wake."

"The artists are all 100% behind the shows," Davidovich says. "For them, television is not a dirty word."

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