

TV PARTY: A PANORAMA OF PUBLIC ACCESS TELEVISION IN NEW YORK CITY

February 11-20, 2011

Guest curators, Leah Churner and Nic Rapold

SOHO TELEVISION PRESENTS

Saturday and Sunday, February 19 and 20, 3:00 pm.

In 1976, a group of artists and institutions formed Cable Soho, a nonprofit organization aimed at putting local art events on cable. One of the founding members, Jaime Davidovich, saw the additional potential for original programming: a televised Cabaret Voltaire. From 1977 to 1984, Davidovich produced artistic entertainment for the home on Soho Television Presents and The Live! Show.

Cable Soho

Promotion for Cable Soho, produced by Jaime Davidovich, 1976

Soho Television Presents

Producer: Jaime Davidovich

Commercial for Soho Television Presents, 1978

“Out Reach: The Changing Role of the Art Museum,” 1978

Les Brown statement excerpted from “The Artist & Television,” a multi-artist performance and live satellite teleconference, 1982

The Live! Show

Producer: Jaime Davidovich

Promotion for *The Live! Show*, 1982

Excerpt from June 1982 episode with Merle Ginsberg, Paul McMahon

Excerpt from Feb 1983 episode, Davidovich and Marshall Efron sell “Videokitsch” and Fluxus stationery products

Excerpt from April 1983 Whitney Biennial special: “Sour Grapes” song by Paul McMahon, and reviews by Davidovich and Hermine Freed

Excerpt from 1984 field report, “Saludos Amigos! Dr. Videovich Goes to Texas.” Davidovich discusses race, television, and art with residents of Lubbock, TX, infiltrates press conference with Bob Hope and asks Hope’s opinion on video art.

Artist Jaime Davidovich on Cable Soho, Soho TV, and The Live! Show, From 2011 interview with Leah Churner in Moving Image Source (www.movingimagesource.us):

“In Soho, there was a movement against the gatekeepers of culture going on—the galleries, museums, and collectors. Artists were trying to do work outside the gallery system, ephemeral works. In 1976 a group of artists and arts organizations

formed a nonprofit called Cable Soho. It included Anthology Film Archives, the Kitchen, Franklin Furnace, Global Village and others. We wanted to create a television station for arts programming. Between all the different organizations, there was enough to fill a channel. The idea was to get a mobile production unit, in a truck that could go around to the different art spaces in Soho and cablecast live events to the rest of the city.

Also in 1976, MCTV realized that there was this new community with many potential customers down in the East Village, Soho, Tribeca, and Battery Park, so they brought cable south of 14th Street. But the cable company wasn't going to pay for the mobile unit, and we tried to raise the funds but couldn't.

So I said, "Okay, we can still tape our own programs and put them on cable." There was a heated debate about this. One group of people left the organization because they said the only reason to do cable was to do live broadcasts of the programming that was already going on. They thought new cable programming wasn't a viable idea because it would be in direct competition with the Kitchen and the other venues.

But my group saw cable as a way to intervene with television. To go inside the TV and do something

directed at people at home. And develop our own audience. So we stayed. To represent our new direction, we changed the name from Cable Soho to the Artists' Television Network. I became the first president and executive producer, and we started a weekly program called Soho Television Presents in 1977. This was not on public access, but on Channel 10, MCTV's own channel. We rented tapes from individual artists and also produced original shows...

...But we knew Soho TV wasn't exploiting the full potential of cable because it was all taped performances and showcases. We wanted to do a show live, something that would bring all kinds of short pieces together and be entertaining. "The variety show of the avant-garde." That was the concept behind *The Live! Show*, which I hosted and produced from 1978 to 1984.

New York had a lot of video artists, but very few of them showed their work on public access. It was too raw, seemed too amateur because it was so low-tech. The major arts foundations were directing funds to programs for public broadcasting, like the TV Lab on Channel 13. That's where the video artists wanted to be, not public access. Access had no art world context whatsoever. To do a show you had to be self-confident enough, or crazy enough, to make a fool of yourself."

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