

ENVIRONMENT/EVENTS

TELEVISION IS!

by Douglas Davis and Fred Pitts

In Look-Out! we used videotape

The Manifestation-Happening-Event-Street

Look-Out! took place at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. in July, 1970. We wanted to turn the entire city inside out. To look away from its inner concerns toward the outside. We wanted a 24-hour mass meditation, a Look-Out! The Event had nothing to do with ecological politics. We sit sideways to that. We just wanted to turn the city inside out, to feel it turning.

The score read:

LOOK OUT AT THE WORLD FOR A MINUTE, AN HOUR, ALL DAY, ALL NIGHT. REPORT WHAT YOU SEE. PHONE IN MESSAGES TO 333-6433. BRING MESSAGES, OBJECTS, DRAWINGS TO THE CORCORAN BETWEEN 8-10 PM. LATE AT NIGHT EACH REPORT WILL BE RECORDED ON GIANT CANVAS. THE CITY CAN BE ART.

Television is

In Look-Out! we

The Manifestations began with Dada, took place in night clubs, admitted audiences. Happenings got rid of audiences, made it all active. The Events of George Bracht and the Fluxus Group were personal and slight, like the Water Street Works, very cool. I began to think that whatever was worth doing had to be done on comfortable scale, that is very large scale. Where our brains are. In units of space like entire cities, states, continents, globes, planetary systems. Aristotle said no man would consider an object 1000 miles long beautiful. But in 1961 Piero Manzoni drew a line from Amsterdam to Milan. Aristotle never rode an airplane, or understood that when we look at the stars we look back millions of years in time.

Look-Out! was our second adventure in scale. The first came in April, 1970, when we went to Kitt Peak Observatory in Arizona and made through heliography the largest direct print ever made of the Sun, hanging now at the Smithsonian, in Washington. The sun's rays, interacting with chemically treated canvas, burned themselves into the picture—making possible a full, clear, non-glare image, impossible with photography. Man Ray's Rayograms are an early Dada example. Our sun is only the beginning. We are working now on the stars, out to the end of the universe and the birth of time. We will use Television to

Look-Out! ended with 1000 people bearing messages, objects, symbols, all coming together in the atrium of the Corcoran. All ages, all hang-ups, even the establishment politicians, the Mayor, senators, congressmen: Eugene McCarthy's office told us he would come and lay a handful of flowers on the canvas. At 10PM we began spreading the records—the results of the 24-hour meditation—on the canvas, specially treated with chemicals, like the Sun print. People spread themselves out on it, along with objects. Every light in the huge gallery out, except the arc lamps, shining down upon the canvas from above, slowly, slowly exposing every inch of the 20 x 30 foot surface. Silence. An hour passes. It is far too late already. We decide to stop now, take what comes. The objects, the people are cleared away. Into the street outside with the canvas, stopping traffic, to wash off the chemicals and look at the picture. A Dada scene in the street: police cars, traffic stretched out for blocks, the canvas in the middle, hundreds grouped around it, others manning the fire hose, water spurting across the canvas. Finally, a procession back into the museum to suspend the soaked canvas, to see the picture.

Television is

All day Don West and a crew composed mostly of artists videotape the city. All day. That night, at the Corcoran, they are there, too, recording what is said, brought and done. Most of all, they record the making of the canvas, the lights burning remorsefully down, the people twitching with the soreness of their cramped legs, the spectators ringed around the canvas, shading their eyes from the intense light. Taping

Television is

Taping even the end, when the poor, epic canvas is hung, badly exposed, very few of the images printing through clearly. Heliography, due to bad conditions, fails. The Event is the victor, though; the Event, the doing of it, the city turning inside out, that gets remembered, not the work of art, the artifact, at the end. The next day we

Paul Haviland, a friend of Picabia's, said it long ago, 1915:

Man made the machine in his own image. She has limbs which act; lungs which breathe; a heart which beats; a nervous system through which runs electricity. The phonograph is the image of his voice; the camera the image of his eye. The machine is his "daughter born without a mother."

Television is

The next day we hang the videotapes in front of the canvas. No one least of all the press, pays any attention to this act. I wasn't sure myself why we did it until days after. Then it became very important. I mean not for the act itself, for what it says about Television. Of course it emphasizes what the failure of the canvas emphasized—the ongoing, living, process. But it also says

Television is the eye in process. It doesn't stop things, fix them in a static form. It is anti-art, in the old sense. It means we must create now in the rhythm of nature itself. Electronic images, KQED is discovering, form in a pattern similar to

Vision is the eye in process. The camera fixed life, like Impressionism. Television—through videotape, vinyl, film—keeps it moving. Our canvas became the first work of art with the capacity to depict its own making.

Television is

The ultimate process medium. What began as a Manifestation ends now properly in the Television Event. It is both inevitable and pleasing. The form matches the medium point for point.

As for Fred and I, we will take TV into space and time, to the beginning/end of the universe, and make art in the rhythm fixed there by the laws of nature.

—D.D. September 1970



Look Out! An Event for the Whole City The Corcoran Gallery of Art

photo: Leroy Woodson, Jr.

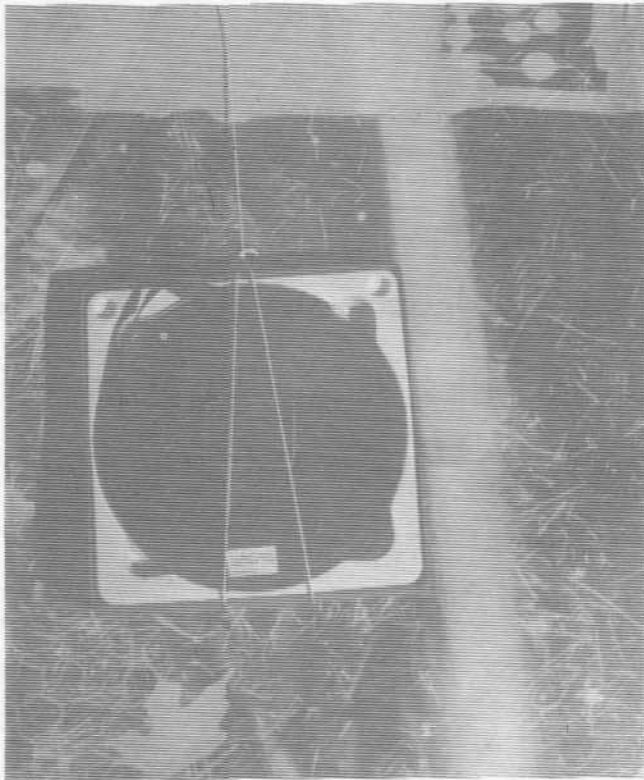


photo: Fred Pitts

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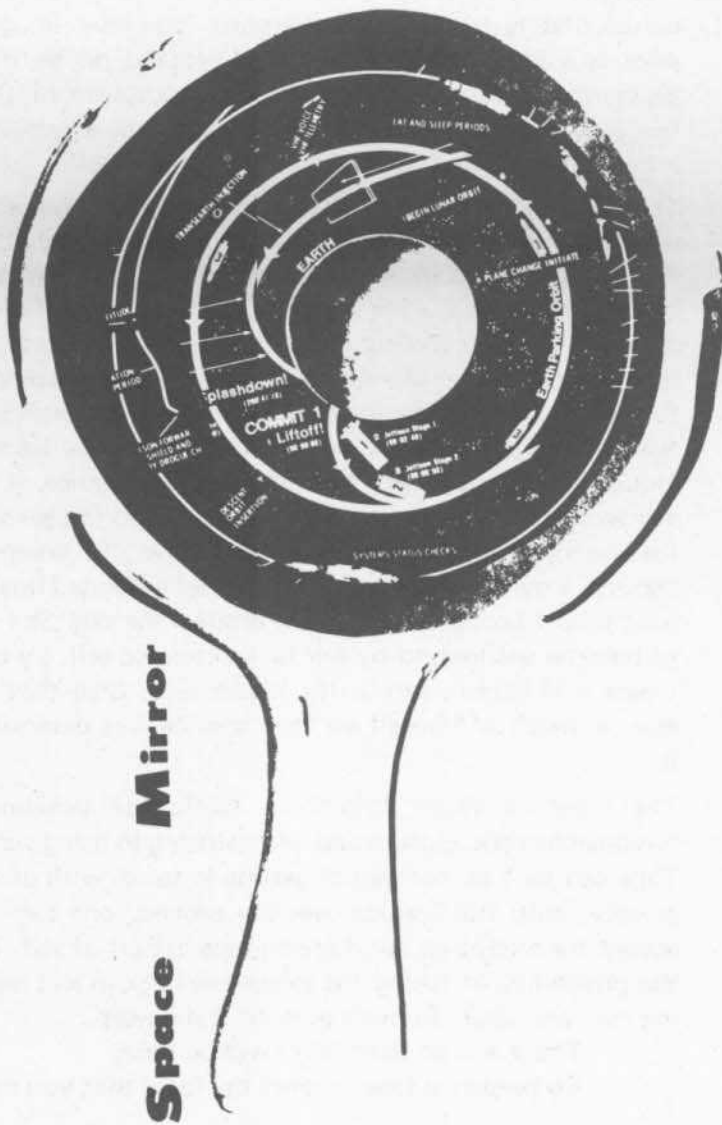


photo: Michael Shamberg

SPACE STATION

by Liam O'Gallagher

... The project would be known as the Space Station. It would be set-up in some place within easy access to the public.

My personal involvement grew out of the awareness that the Media, because it is having such a persuasive impact on our culture represents a potential art form which should be experimented with, and on another level, not unrelated, is the question of satisfying young people especially from the ghetto, that their energy—instead of being exclusively drained off by political anarchy—could take a creative form in challenging the new technology, thereby gaining some control over it.

The plan then is to provide the environment where these two forces can meet and explore together both the aesthetic and the social aspects of this tremendous power which so far has been left largely in the hands of commercial interests.

Where the commercial interests have placed most of the emphasis on technical ingenuity, we would put our emphasis more on creative imagination.

This might be done in a storefront downtown or in an empty room in a local museum. I have discussed such a possibility with one of the directors of the Oakland Museum of Art, whose experience with the above problem leads me to believe that such a space would very likely be made available. The area designated for the project would be called a Space Station where experiments with audio and video space would be carried on. In this audio-video space, levels of awareness concerning the borders and boundaries of one's body and various objects would pass through Changes determined by the individual which would help him and the experimenter to discover implications of the image with regard to control of the Media. This experience would help confirm people in their decision to take an active role in determining the Content of the media and to provide contexts, having provided their own, in which others can, who desire, do the same. Some of the concepts and their interrelations which might be put in audio-video space are:

1. I will decide what is best for me to do.
2. I want to control the situation in which I live.
3. I can only know the world through my own eyes and the same for everyone else/concurrence system.
4. Conformity is not only undesirable, it's impossible.
5. A person should not follow a directive if it doesn't make sense to him.
6. Be careful—what you want, you may get.

In a group situation this interplay might also serve as a substitute for telepathy in communicating essential concepts. As a kind of personal learning it provides a visual stimulation/meditation experience for the stimulation of sensory awareness and learning. The interesting difference between this and the usual methods of gestalt and/or film, is that television being a Constant picture (like the mind?) can accommodate Change without fear of loss of image, and the viewer can make up his own mind about what he is seeing.

ELECTRONIC TUNE UP

"One total visual can make one aware of outside movement as well as being made aware of the movement within the existing environment."

Andrea Brown

The latest video piece by Andrea Brown is one entitled, *Electronic Tune Up* and will be displayed at Cal State LA, through the month of Oct 70. *Electronic Tune Up* is a totally automated multi-event video sculpture created technically for Andrea by Charles Bensinger. Three large monitors are used, structured in a vertical fashion, topped with a video camera fitted with a special fisheye lens. A modified auto-rewind Shibaden series 700 VTR is placed on a black pedestal flanking the vertical monitors. Across the room is another video camera fitted with a remote control electric zoom lens. The lens is wired to a custom circuit design which causes the lens to zoom in and out at a preselected speed continually and automatically.

Prior to the exhibition of the piece, Andrea taped continuously for 18 hours with a special variable speed VTR operated by Rick Bloom of Odetics Inc. In downtown LA and on the freeways, certain rear views of trucks were selected displaying unusual design or apparatus. Traffic patterns on the freeways were recorded, along with human individuals, and events along the streets. All events were taped at a greatly reduced speed on the special time lapse control Odetics Shibaden VTR. The VTR was powered by a 12 volt car battery. When the 18 hr tape was played back at regular speed, it completed a full showing of the taped material in 7 minutes, displaying the events in a greatly accelerated fashion. The prerecorded tape was then placed on a Shibaden auto-rewind VTR which then served to play the tape continuously and automatically. This is done with a special transparent leader on the tape which is sensed by a light relay. (Made specially by Shibaden)

The truck and traffic tape is therefore being viewed on the center monitor. The top monitor displays a static fisheye picture of the crowd facing the video sculpture, while the bottom monitor displays a continuously zooming composite picture of all three monitors and the backs of the crowd watching the video piece. Thus, exterior time and physical elements are combined with interior spontaneous elements of both static and motion picture. The spectator is confronted by the technology, is entertained and involved within, and becomes an integral part of what he is viewing. The sounds of the electronic oscillation of the VTR itself are amplified providing the audio portion of the piece.

Individuals viewing the piece seem to be captivated for long periods of time by the events taking place on the monitors.

Charles Bensinger
Oct. 5, 1970