

Woodstock Community Video

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THE ARTISTS' TV LAB

(WCV)

The Artists' TV Lab was established in 1973 with a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts. It is designed to serve: 1) as a video resource center in the Catskill/Mid-Hudson region of New York state providing artists of all disciplines the opportunity to access 1/2" video technology at little or no cost; and 2) to conduct video training workshops to promote the broader use of the medium. Also, through WCV's town cable TV channel programming activities, the Lab can provide an outlet for the exposure of video works.

In the 3 years of Lab operations, WCV has expanded its equipment base from B/W to color editing facilities with color synthesis and adjunct audio system, keeping up-to-date technologically, though somewhat limited in the amount of resources. Approximately 50 artists annually have utilized Lab resources and staff expertise. The staff is made up of artists, themselves, who lend their creative energy to benefit other as well as perform their own works.

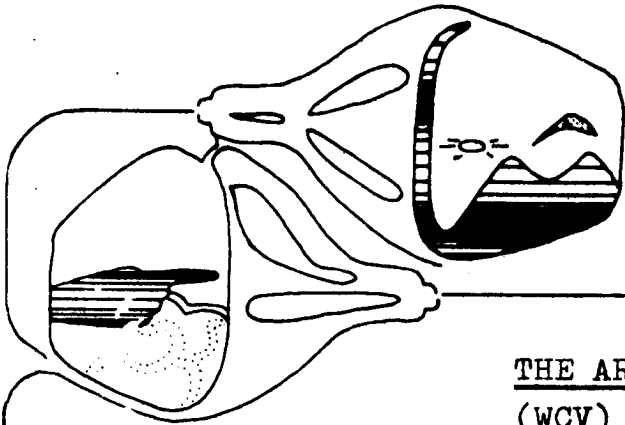
The Artists' TV Lab is presently being expanded and refined to play a greater role in the creative environment of the Northeastern region. It is to this that this statement is addressed.

BACKGROUND

Throughout the history of Western civilization have been periods of interplay between the arts and the sciences which have contributed to shape human consciousness and the environment. In an age when science was embodied in religious belief systems, the arts of painting and sculpture articulated consciousness of gods and spirit-powers contributing to the creation of symbol forms and systems.

During the Renaissance, knowledge was liberated from the gods and empirical experience and experimentation gained credence and wide application. Creative individuals criss-crossed the boundaries of the sciences and the arts contributing to contemporary frameworks of knowledge, i.e., anatomy, astronomy, chemistry, physics, etc., while advancing graphic, sculptural, and architectural forms and systems.

Nineteenth century industrialization altered object-making from hand-crafted techniques to machine manufactured



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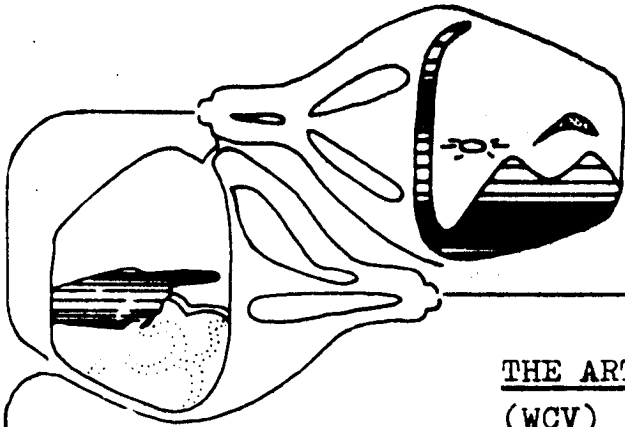
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technologies. Technology, as mechanical extensioning of human capabilities to levels beyond human capacities, can be viewed as an outgrowth of the interplay of the arts and the sciences; an outgrowth which today stands on a par.

As technology was expanded, based on scientific data, new media were developed, i.e., photography, sound recording, radio, TV, etc. The mass-media emerged and have expanded creative potentials and the means by which the arts are experienced. Industrial processes and new materials gave impetus to the formation of such artists' environments as the Bauhaus. It represented one of the first movements by artists touched by the technological environment to organize interdisciplinary cooperation and feed back to that environment, while maintaining individual creative expression as a primary value.

Of the more recent link-ups of the arts and the sciences is the Bell Labs assisted Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) which witnessed the engagement of electronic technologies and the artist. Now, TV and computers, audio synthesizers and bio-feedback systems are emerging as prime tools of artists. Much of the concepts of the works coming from these artists are based in nature, as was the case in the Bauhaus which was strongly invested in an aesthetic of the natural and organic. Today's natural and organic is commensurate with the advanced levels of scientific investigation; levels of sub-atomic physics, electro-chemical bio-processes, etc.

Due to the high costs of technologies and advanced scientific research there has been a decrease of individual efforts and a growth of institutional and corporate structures. Industry has become the prime mover of technological developments and the prime consumer thereof. Thus, profit considerations override creative, social, and humanistic ones. Limited access to technology prohibits broad and frequent exploration and development of uses related to the arts. Artists, once so instrumental in shaping human consciousness and the environment, are kept from optimal realization of their role in society. While product development laboratories are numerous, artists' laboratories are almost non-existent.



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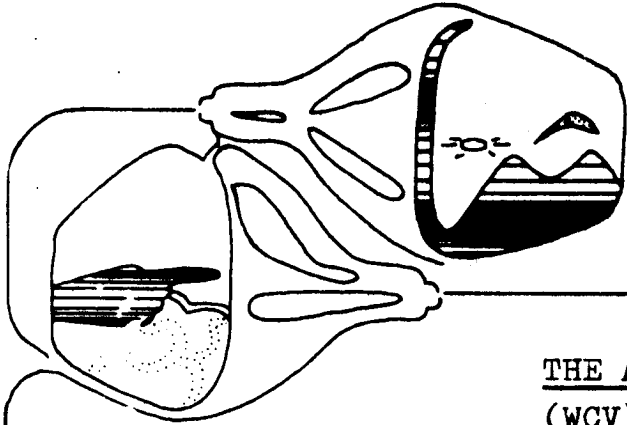
PURPOSE

It is with cognizance of the above and in that spirit that we are undertaking to expand and refine WCV's Artists' TV Lab. The primary purpose of the Lab will be to provide and maintain a center to promote interdisciplinary cooperation among artists of various media, scholars and scientists of various pursuits. The Lab will include a pool of equipment composed of a variety of electronic technologies made available to Lab participants for individual and cooperative projects, an information exchange component for the collection and dissemination of materials related to the arts and the sciences, and an electronic media performance capability to encourage the production of events for public exposure of experimental forms of creative expression.

The Lab will act to serve the growing consciousness and concern of many practitioners and lay people for the technological and scientific environment and its social impact, particularly in the arts. It will fill the need for an installation in which artists can access expensive technologies in an environment conducive to their ways of working, unimpeded by commercial considerations. The Lab will serve to bring together and create common languages and experiences for creative individuals of various pursuits in the arts, the sciences, and technology.

FACILITY

The physical plant for Lab activities includes an edit room, tape archive, office, studio, and rooming facilities. It is located in Woodstock, N.Y., a long-time Catskill Mt. retreat for artists of the New York metropolitan area and a year-round artists' colony since the turn of the century. Parnassus Square, conveniently situated near the center of town, is a complex of barns with winterized spaces for year-round use. WCV presently occupies a 20' x 40' barn which serves as a studio, office, and small video theatre with a 60 seat capacity. The building is also equipped with a town cable TV channel origination line for direct and live programming to the community. A second space houses the edit room, archive, and rooming facilities which are made available to program participants for their stay in Woodstock. Other spaces within the complex can serve for eventual expansion. They include a 40' x 80' barn with possible two-storey capacity.



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LAB PROGRAMS

The Lab is structured into a four-part program: 1) Symposia; 2) Magazine; 3) Synergism; and 4) Equipment Pool.

SYMPOSIA

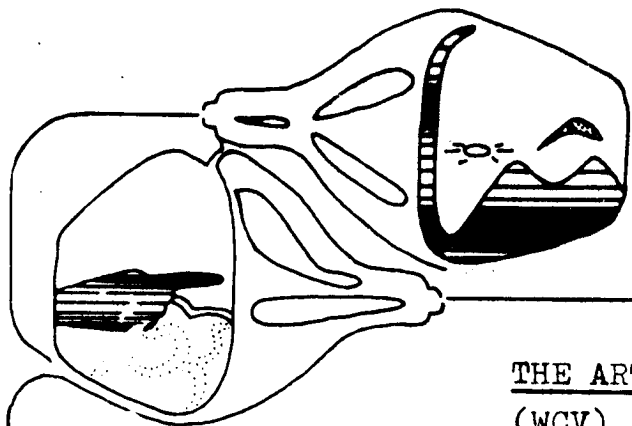
The optimum utilization of any resource is invariably furthered by easy access to the accumulated information about that resource. Sources for information are: 1) people directly involved in a specific area of activity; and 2) storage media, i.e., print, magnetic tape, film, etc., which serve to record the experiences and reflections thereof, of people involved in specific areas of activity, i.e., artists, researchers, practitioners, etc.

Libraries and archives serve to centralize and conveniently locate recorded information and thereby maximize access. Human informational resources are similarly housed under a single roof, however, only in a few situations, i.e., universities, corporations, government agencies, etc., which tend to limit open access. Due to specialized work goals, valuable interdisciplinary interactions are not commonplace. Only during infrequent professional gatherings do dislocated practitioners come together, and then they are usually of like concerns. Seldom are the opportunities for organized, cross-referencing of a variety of areas of concern toward experimentation and development of holistic systems and theories.

The Symposia program is specifically designed to develop formats for needed interdisciplinary activities. Artists, scholars, scientists, etc., will be brought together to share their ideas and energies to benefit themselves, their areas of concern, and society. Anticipated on a regular basis are series of symposia dealing with themes relevant to the contemporary issues confronting the arts, the sciences, and technology.

To date, under this program, WCV holds an annual video festival, the Woodstock Video Expovision, and periodic symposia with featured guests leading all-day activities involving a limited audience of artists, scholars, etc.

The first video festival was held in August, 1975 over a five-day period. It consisted of tape showings of about



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50 video makers of New York state. Evening events included a video synthesizer lecture-demonstration, an electronic media performance with dance, a presentation of tapes and discussion by Earthscore Foundation on ecological and behavioral philosophies of media, a video environment by artists of Media Bus, and a panel discussion of issues related to the medium with such participants as Gerd Stern of Intermedia Systems, Barbara London of the Museum of Modern Art, and John Godfrey of WNET's Experimental TV Lab. The 1976 Exposition will occur in September and feature the theme of Arts and Technology in all evening presentations. Assistance from the New York Foundation on the Arts has been helpful in bringing about the video festival and symposia.

Notable are 4 day-long symposia to take place within early 1976. Guest leaders will be Charles Dodge of Columbia University, School of Music, Joel Chadabee of the Music Dept. of SUNY Albany, Ralph Hocking of the Experimental TV Center in Binghamton, and Woody and Steina Vasulka of SUNY Buffalo. The day's activities will include showings and performances of the works of guests, seminar on guest's area of concern, discussion and cooperative effort to create a work utilizing the town cable TV channel for public exposure.

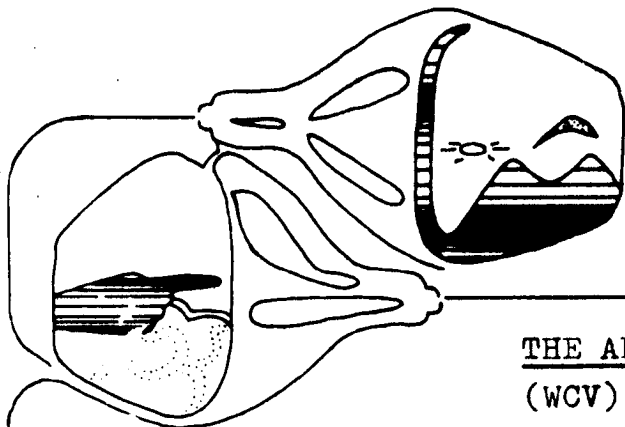
MAGAZINE

As there is limited interdisciplinary activity in the arts and the sciences, so there is a lack of recorded information. Given a mechanism which could provide easy access to, and be philosophically oriented toward interdisciplinary concerns, an expansion of such activity could occur.

Inherent in media are formats for packaging and distribution of information. Since the Lab is primarily equipped with tools of electronic media, it can organically generate audio and video tapes reporting its activities for others to hear and view. Further, print products are a regular part of the output of this organization, and serve to interconnect it with others in the locale and across the country.

The Magazine program of the Artists' TV Lab will function to collect, compile, produce, and distribute print and tape information on a regular basis. The effort will be dedicated to dissemination of information of the arts, sciences, and technology emphasizing interdisciplinary activities,

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theories, and potentials reflecting the development of creative expression and the enrichment of the cultural environment.

SYNERGISM

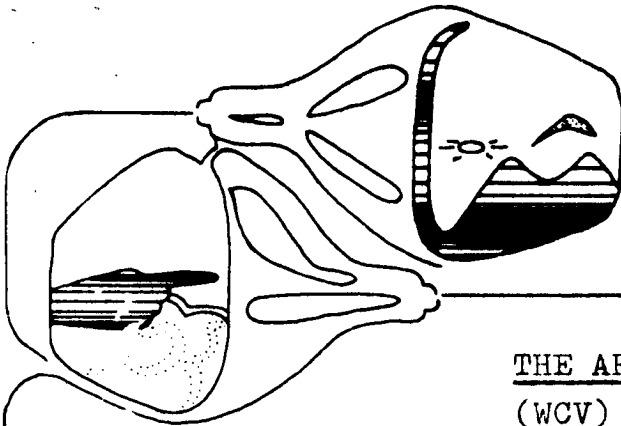
Common experiences are prerequisite for effective communication among individuals of varying interests. Such communications can lead to more frequent and qualitative interactions. As a particular configuration of commonly accessible resources, the Artists' TV Lab is like an instrument; an instrument which requires a number of players to cooperatively manipulate it.

Synergism, as defined in a dictionary, is the simultaneous action of separate agencies which, together, have greater total effect than the sum of their original effects. WCV has taken this term to describe its electronic media performance program. Synergism is the interplay of systems, i.e., the arts, sciences, and technology; dance, electronically generated sound and image; people, machines, and concepts; etc. It is that function of the Lab which serves to facilitate the working together of artists, scientists, scholars, etc., in producing performances, exhibitions, TV programming, etc. for public exposure.

Synergism has, to date, performed publically at the Woodstock Video Exposition '75, the Woodstock Artists Association, the Joyous Lake Supper Club, and the Anthology Film Archives in New York. Works have utilized live video inputs mixed with pre-recorded video inputs fed into a video synthesizer, raster control devices, colorizer, signal generators, audio synthesized, pre-recorded and live treated sound, a light keyboard-control device with color illumination, sculpture, some with sound generation, and dancers.

Expansion of technological capabilities include the incorporation of medically related systems for monitoring biological functions and their use as compositional elements in performances; also, interfascibility among various systems, such as the video, audio, and lights for common, centralized control using computers for programming.

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EQUIPMENT POOL

Central to the viability of an artists' laboratory is acquisition and maintenance of a variety of technologies. Half-inch video equipment, as indicated above, has been the main resource of the Lab. Expansion of video technology is a primary aim to meet the steadily increasing demand of artists for access to post-production facilities capable of generating broadcast standard product for TV distribution, museum exhibitions, and duplication for broader closed-circuit distribution and cable TV.

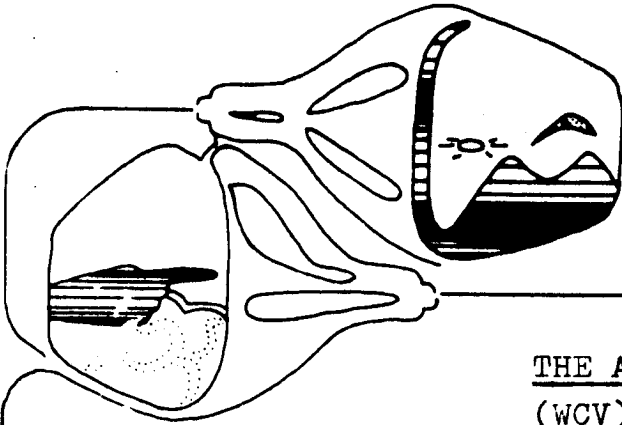
Post-production facilities have been developed for artists' projects as adjunct components of a number of public television stations, i.e., WNET's experimental TV project in New York, WGBH's similar facility in Boston, etc. Such centers, however, are equipped with prohibitively expensive 2" video technology which require operation by advanced technicians and engineers. Lacking is a configuration of equipment which can allow for hands-on manipulation by artists interested in spontaneous, explorative, and direct development of works.

The evolvement of electronics in recent years has produced second and third generations of technologies with such features as lower costs, smaller size, simplified design and operation, and interfability between formats of various levels of sophistication. Particularly important is the equipment which allows transferring from low-cost, 1/2" signal to broadcast standards. It is from these later generations of technology that the Lab will comprise its equipment pool.

Video and audio production and post-production systems function as the backbone of the equipment pool. To meet the broader interests and potentials for development of forms of creative expression, other technologies are vital, i.e., biological monitoring, computer, holographic, lighting, etc. Associations with independent designers and engineers will be ongoing to maximize the development of specialized equipment needs which emerge directly from the interactions of Lab participants. The Lab, in essence, will incorporate its own technological development capability.

Further facilities would eventually include model-making equipment providing for two- and three-dimensional object production for stage environments, exhibitions, models, etc.

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Also, to facilitate production of print materials as a part of the Magazine program, mimeography equipment, i.e., stencil cutter, printer, binder, etc., will be acquired. A photo lab will be set up and include Kirlian photography equipment.

ADMINISTRATION

The Artists' TV Lab is administered by Woodstock Community Video, Inc., a not-for-profit, tax-exempt, cultural organization chartered in the state of New York. The expansion and refinement of the Lab necessitates attracting funds and in-kind contributions from a variety of sources in both the private and public sectors. Support is required for equipment acquisition, maintenance, and development, administrative costs such as staff, space and utilities, and other operating expenses, and funds for operating the Magazine and Symposia programs, i.e., publication supplies, honorariums, etc.

WCV is researching local higher educational institutions, i.e., Bard College, Vassar College, Marist College, and others, for possible establishment of an associative relationship beneficial to both institutions; for the educational site, an off-campus research facility for its scholars and students, and for WCV, an avenue to the academic sphere and its resources on a stable and regular basis.

In summary, the Artists' TV Lab will function to serve as a creative development laboratory for artists, scientists, and scholars to explore and realize greater interdisciplinary interactions toward the development of creative forms of expression and enrichment of the cultural environment.