

## **Broadcast**

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### Traveling Exhibition Project Description



Doug Hall, Chip Lord, Jody Procter, *The Amarillo News Tapes* (video still), 1980

**Curated by Irene Hofmann**

**Co-Organized by iCI and the Contemporary Museum, Baltimore**

Tour Dates: September 2007 through March 2010

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*Broadcast* is an exhibition that explores the ways in which artists since the late 1960s have engaged, critiqued, and inserted themselves into official channels of broadcast television and radio. This is the first exhibition of its kind to explore this engaging subject and to examine this provocative body of work.

From TVTV's iconoclastic television broadcast from the floor of the 1972 Republican Convention, to Gregory Green's recent pirate radio station installations, artists have intervened into systems of broadcasting as a means of examining or challenging the influence and power of TV and radio. Works such as these address the rise of media culture over the past thirty years. The works confront the power structure behind broadcast media, challenge the incessant flow of broadcast material, and propose alternative distribution channels.



Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, *Search – En Busqueda*, 2000



Chris Burden, *TV Hijack*, February 9, 1972

artists in this exhibition subvert the authority and influence of a pervasive and powerful medium.

At times, the works in *Broadcast* are hostile, as in the case of Chris Burden's infamous 1972 hostage-taking of a TV-host at knifepoint; other times they are more collaborative, such as Doug Hall, Chip Lord, and Jody Procter's 1980 "artists-in-residence" participation at Station KVII-TV in Amarillo, Texas. In still other instances, an artist's engagement with broadcasting involves the critical reuse of previously broadcast material, such as Dara Birnbaum's use of archival media coverage from the 1977 kidnapping of the German industrialist Hanns Martin Schleyer by the Baader Meinhof group, or Antonio Muntadas' studies of broadcasting conventions in cities worldwide at different moments in history. Whether appropriating its conventions and programs, or engaging in a live TV or radio broadcast, the

While important and influential exhibitions have been mounted that examine artists' use of television (*TV as a Creative Medium*, 1969, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, and *Vision and Television*, 1970, The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University); or the impact of television and the television set on our culture (*From Receiver to Remote Control*, 1990, The New Museum, New York), there has not been an exhibition that considers the range of work engaged in the act of TV and radio broadcasting. The works selected for inclusion in *Broadcast* are predicated on broadcast and media critique. They often address conditions of live broadcasting—appropriation of news reporting, intervention in live programs, and creation of extensive broadcasts are some of the strategies employed in these works.



Christian Jankowski, *Telemistica*, 1999

The art in the exhibition falls into two categories: *Broadcasting* and *Re-Broadcasting*. *Broadcasting* includes works that involve an artist intervening into existing broadcasts or broadcasting channels by participating in a live broadcast (either as an invited or uninvited participant) or by creating a broadcast. Works in *Re-Broadcasting* feature the use or manipulation of previously existing TV or radio material. In both these categories, there are two impulses followed by the artists—either an iconoclastic, aggressive position, at times intended to question FCC regulations, or a more cooperative, collaborative and distanced position on the other.

Broadcast radio emerged as the dominant form of mass media in the 1920s when it became a venue for news, sports and entertainment. The power and reach of radio, as well as its presumed position of authority is exemplified by the panic created in 1938 when a radio adaptation of H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* was broadcast on CBS radio, convincing hundreds of thousands of people that Martians were invading New Jersey. While television would soon eclipse radio's media dominance, it would never quite be able to match the psychological power of radio in its early days. Over the last several decades, artists have engaged with radio broadcasting on a number of levels. From John Cage's use of twelve radios for his 1951 *Landscape No. 4*; to Robert Rauschenberg's 1959 painting *Broadcast* with three working radios attached; to Chris Burden's fundraising stunt *Send Me Your Money* on KPFK-FM Los Angeles in 1979; to Gregory Green's pirate radio station in the basement of his New York gallery in 1995, radio has been an artistic source of both inspiration and critique.

Developed as a postwar commercial venture by radio broadcasting networks, television did not find a widespread audience until the early 1960s when the medium far surpassed the impact of radio and became a staple of American entertainment, consciousness and opinion-shaping. Although it surged in popularity, the content and control of television came under early scrutiny, for as broadcast historian Garth Jowett observed:

Despite the official rhetoric about the enormous educational and informational potential of the medium, the institutions which were capable of developing this role for television (universities, schools...) were never able to penetrate successfully or alter the dominant discourse which took for granted that television was going to be essentially "visual radio" with some content aspects of the motion picture industry grafted on to it. (*Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, June 1994)

As a response to this perceived void in content and the expanding influence of the TV networks, the nation also saw a rapid expansion in the noncommercial broadcast industry with the formation of a growing number of educational and cable television stations that began to challenge commercial network autonomy. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting was established by Congress in 1967 to provide federal funding for 'a new and fundamental institution in American culture,' and the Public Broadcasting Service was formed in 1969.



Dara Birnbaum, *Hostage*, 1994

The development of artists' access to television also began at this time, simultaneous with the 1965 release of Sony's portable video camera, the Portapak. With this equipment, the first generation of video artists began to create work that adopted a critical relationship to broadcast television. This technology made it possible to build an alternative production, distribution and exhibition program out of video--once the exclusive domain of commercial broadcasting. Inspired by the insights of theorists like Marshall McLuhan, many of these artists had idealistic visions of the medium of TV and of changing the structure and power of information channels in the United States. Video collectives began to form during this period aspiring to reform television, making it more responsive to the needs of a generation raised on the medium. Such groups were interested in using video to create an alternative to what they viewed as the aesthetically bankrupt and commercially corrupt broadcast medium.

While this exhibition focuses primarily on more recent artists' explorations of broadcast themes, it is helpful to trace the development of this topic,

as an increasingly relevant area of artistic production. *Broadcast* will include a small selection of important early works; some artists in the late 1960s and 1970s began to broadcast on their own, seeking a parallel system to commercial broadcast television, while others began to cooperate with progressive public television stations that invited artists to participate in residency programs. Public television station WGBH in Boston was one of the earliest supporters of video art for broadcast television, for example. In New York, Television Laboratory (1972-1984) was developed at Thirteen/WNET, establishing an experimental

workshop and opening up its broadcasting studio facilities to video artists. Some of the first works by the guerrilla television group TVTV were edited at WNET's TV Lab.

By the mid 1980s, however, most of the artist video collectives had disbanded and the public television stations, including WNET and WGBH, that had boldly collaborated with artists, found themselves canceling their programming. Support for the arts in general was on the decline and the idealistic goals of these groups were jeopardized by the economy, politics and the shifting priorities of the public. What was born out of the counterculture's clash with establishment values and institutions and an idealism about the medium of television, was ultimately also subject to the counterculture's own disillusionment and disintegration.

Just as these broadcast outlets and resources were disappearing, however, the medium was gaining increased acceptance in museums. With the emergence of video projection technology, video art was on its way to redefining itself. With these changes, not only did artists have a new format to explore but an increasingly supportive public venue for their time-based works. In the decades to come, video-based work would transform how art could be experienced, and while much of video art today is far removed from its early collaborations with broadcast television, artists continue to engage and critique official broadcasting channels and the pervasive impact the medium has on our culture.

We now find ourselves at a moment when advances in technology can enable almost anyone to produce sound or video material for broadcast. "Reality TV" can make a star out of anyone and with the ease of internet radio and video broadcasting, anyone can broadcast to anywhere around the globe. At the same time that there appears to be a democratizing shift in the landscape of broadcasting, there is actually an increasing consolidation of media into three or four major companies, producing entities of far-reaching power and influence. An exhibition that explores artistic responses to such conditions in the culture is indeed timely. This is this rich and complex territory that will be explored in *Broadcast*.

### **Artists in the exhibition**

Dara Birnbaum

Chris Burden

Gregory Green

Doug Hall, Chip Lord, and Jody Procter

Christian Jankowski

Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle

Antoni Muntadas

neuroTransmitter

Nam June Paik

TVTV / Top Value Television

Siebren Versteeg

### **Organization of the Exhibition**

Co-organized by the Contemporary Museum, Baltimore, and iCI, New York, *Broadcast* is curated by Irene Hofmann.

### **About the Curator**

Irene Hofmann is Executive Director of the Contemporary Museum in Baltimore. Recently, as Curator of Contemporary Art at the Orange County Museum of Art, she was co-curator of the 2002 and 2004 *California Biennial*. She has organized exhibitions and projects with artists such as Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, Mark Dion, Jason Dodge, Kutlug Ataman, Marjetica Potrč, Fabrice Gygi and Joseph Grigely.

### **Technical Requirements**

- 7 DVD players (NTSC)
- 3 DVD players (PAL)
- 3 standard TV monitors, black, 19-24"
- 3-5 standard TV monitors or flat screen monitors, at least 19"
- 1-3 projectors (all at least 1,200 lumens)
- 4 speakers
- 3 amplifiers
- 3-8 TV monitor pedestals
- 1 12 x 12 carpet
- 3 classroom chairs with desk attachments
- 3 headphone sets
- 1-2 darkened projection rooms with seating
- 1-2 viewing areas with seating
- 0-1 separate rooms for sound installation
- 0-1 lobby or street-level windows for video installation
- 1 internet connection (wired or wireless)
- Several extensions and power strips on standby

### **Basic Facts**

**Participation fee: \$10,000 for 10 weeks, plus incoming shipping**

**Number of artists or artist teams: 12**

**Number of works: 17**

**Space required: 4,000-5,000 square feet**

**Tour dates: September 2007 through March 2010**

**Wall texts, cell phone tour, press and education materials provided.**



Siebre Versteeg, *CC*, 2003