"It's the new everything," says Andy Warhol

Andy Warhol was commissioned to make a television commercial for New York's formerly staid Schrafft's restaurant chain as part of a campaign to rejuvenate the Schrafft's image by F. Wiliams Frey & Co., an advertising agency. The result, above, made in late 1964, is The Underground Sundae, a 60-second color video-tape opus centering in and out of focus on a chocolate sundae. Warhol achieved a scale range of "cosmetic" colors and planned to get effects of a color television set tuned incorrectly. He was concerned with the range of color- and image-distortion possibilities in the video-tape medium. Says Warhol, "My movies have been working towards TV. It's the new everything. No more books or movies, just TV." And Schrafft's obligingly created an "Underground Sundae" for their restaurants: "Tiffany Schrafft's vanilla ice cream in two groovy heaps with three scoops of mind-blowing chocolate sauce undehling with a mound of pure whipped cream topped with a pulsating maraschino cherry served in a bowl as big as a boat, $1.10."

Les Levine's Contact: A Cybernetic Sculpture was completed in 1969 under a commission by Gulf & Western Industries for the lobby of their new headquarters building under construction in New York. The eight-foot-high television sculpture will have identical "seeing" sides facing in two directions, each side having near television monitors and four TV cameras equipped with different lenses and set at different angles. The screens of each monitor are covered by colored acrylic sheets. As the spectator stands before Contact, he sees images of himself in close-up, mid-range and long-range focus and material programmed through a slide scanner; the images jump from monitor to monitor in random sequence. The sculpture is encased in stainless steel with reflective plastic bubbles covering each "seeing" side. "Contact is a system that synthesizes man with his technology," says Levine. "In this system, the people are the software." Photo by Hans Namuth.
and especially American culture. The generation which has grown up with television and other sophisticated media has evolved a new perception in processing information. Electric and electronic media—radio, television, film and recordings—along with the continuing growth of traditional print media, have created an information explosion.

In assimilating and processing this information, the individual is likely to shift his attention among many alternatives within any given period of time. He relies more on visual and aural sources than on printed information, which imposes longer and more concentrated demands on the attention span. This new attitude can be called "process-level" perception as contrasted with "content-level" perception common to people who grew up with print media as their primary source of information. However, these boundaries are not rigid; individual perception is a blend of the two in varying proportions.

A process-level analysis of the art experience is concerned with art as a process of perception, a way of experiencing, how one sees rather than what one sees. Therefore the concept of art becomes an inclusive one, and everything is or isn't art, according to one's experience. The process level offers direct, sensory perception, with content determined by individual relevance, rather than by formalized, intellectual considerations. It denies the traditional "critical" function of the critic, since relevant standards cannot be established beyond one's personal experience. Art at the process level denies a fixed relationship between spectator and object or event because there is no fixed space or time, and there are no absolute distinctions such as right and wrong, good and bad, beginning and end. The process level generates such art forms as environmental art (where the art object within a space is replaced by total treatment of the space, the space itself becoming the "object"); happenings, performances and street events; multi-projection films (where the spectator has to choose from any number of simultaneous images in order to determine his own "content"); and architecture considered as broad, inter-disciplinary design.

With the growth and influence of process-level perception, a new concept of the art and entertainment experience has evolved, the key to the new experience being the provision of options for the spectator's attention. The new experience affirms the concepts of participation, simultaneity, spontaneity and the accidental. Television is a prime example of this new experience, with its option of many channels to be viewed simultaneously with a number of receivers or sequentially by changing the channel. Looking at TV for fixed periods of time, as if in a theater or movie, denies its function as a continuous flow of assorted information to be processed by the individual according to his perception. Television can become part of a regular life style, a fabric of individual perception, a super-real reflection of the city, country, world. And the televised image is but one of many options—the image and sound can be changed immediately, the spectator can eat, drink, sit, lie down, read, talk.

"Television has given us a totally different idea of focus," says sculptor and conceptual artist Les Levine, "the same way as photography changed our way of looking at images in relationship to the way we paint them. Television has made multiple focus acceptable; as a result I can see many different focal planes all at once. We can go from one focus to another and refocus all at once. When you focus your eyes from one thing to another, it's necessary not to keep any one thing in focus too long, otherwise you can't immediately change to another."

The growing importance of process-level perception is related to the breakdown of the traditional spectator-to-object (or -event) relationship. The breakdown is really an evolution where the spectator's experience has become increasingly important as the object has decreased in importance. At the process level, ownership of any object is decreasingly important because the object can provide only so much information within fixed parameters, rather than the flow of continuous information and images. And when the object is present, ownership becomes a responsibility that is more important than the experience of the object. Art reflecting turns out to be more about reflecting than about the object. And what does a person do when he gets sick of looking at his valuable object? He certainly can't throw it away, selling it becomes a bother, and the owner might be able to gain something by expecting it to sell again at some future time. The implication is that the owner must keep it. Les Levine's production of "disposable art" is concerned with this very concept.

Gregory Battcock, producer and director of the Television Gallery in Dusseldorf (where films of "the earth" artists were broadcast and displayed in a studio on about twenty TV monitors for the "opening"), echoes this attitude toward objects and ownership: "One day, I am the reproduction of an art event as, better, one art idea by the TV medium will be more important than selling art objects to a single collector. The artist will be paid by the publishing of an event or project or event. It's not the object of art that is sold, but the communication between artist and audience by the publishing medium. What counts is the idea of the artist and not the limited result of an idea realized in an object. Objects are no more the end of an artistic development. Objects are a stage of a mental process, part of an idea in development. Important is the idea itself."

The essence of the artist's role is undergoing a transformation; the artist is emerging as a communicator. At the process level, a person who is an "artist" is one who can experience directly through his senses. His effectiveness as an artist can be judged by how well he communicates his perception. Art, therefore, becomes a two-step process—formulation or creation of an idea and communication of this idea—and the two steps are intricately related. At this stage of communication, the importance of the idea is linked to the number of people who can experience the idea. So it is quite logical for the artist to seek out the greatest audience possible, and to spread it up in the field of television. Marshall McLuhan's books and articles on the communications media, including much perceptive analysis of television, have had a great influence on many "media" artists and writers. But McLuhan noted that the medium is not the message. The medium is not an end in itself, but is rather a means. What I am proposing is a revision of the concept of "message" or content. The new concept of communication, the importance of the idea, is linked to the number of people who can experience the idea. So it is quite logical for the artist to seek out the greatest audience possible, and to spread it up in the field of television. At this time a 10-minute video tape was broadcast on one of the TV channels, as well as a 10-minute tape on the radio. Meanwhile a selected home audience of 500 people were instructed to watch and listen. As they did, all received telephone calls and 100 received telegrams.

Allen Kaprow in his Hello, a portion of "The Medium is the Medium"—a nationally telecast program produced in January 1966 by WGBH-TV, Boston—chose four sites in the Boston area and interconnected them with five TV cameras and 27 monitors. A group of people assembled at each site with the only requirement being that they acknowledge their own presence. They were also asked to say "Hello Bob" or "I love you, Paul," etc. Says Kaprow: "Everyone was a participant, creating the medium. Transmission and receiving and transmitting information all at once. That information was not a newsreel or lecture, but the most important message of all: oneself in connection with someone else..."

We had fun. We played. We became something else, transformed by audio-video images that eliminated distances and shifted us to a totally new non-place, the TV realm of electronic bits. And the artist arrives in an expanded form of Helly produced as a global backdrop.

Argentine artist Marta Minujin performed the event "Simultaneity in Simultaneity" in Buenos Aires in October 1966 by combining the media of television, radio, film, photography, telephphone, telegram and newspaper. A predetermined phase of the event took place when 60 well-known personalities came into a theater with 60 radios and TV sets, where photographs were taken and recorded. Eleven days later the 60 people were invited to a party where they were entered they saw their images projected and recorded from the different information sources. At this time a 20-minute video tape was broadcast on one of the TV channels, as well as a 20-minute tape on the radio. Meanwhile a selected home audience of 500 people were instructed to watch and listen. As they did, all received telephone calls and 100 received telegrams.

John H. Margolies has written on architecture, the arts and the many media for several national journals. A member of the executive committee of the Architectural League of New York, he directed the League's program of events from 1966 to 1968.
than radio with a picture, a vaudeville show miniaturized, a newspaper with an audible voice, a prosegenium stage or sports arena reduced to 169 square inches, a tiny movie projection device. It is a source of immediate, transient information. Television is the ultimate "reproducible" image, and, says TV artist Nam June Paik, "the cathode ray screen is as important as paper."

In communicating information, television not only transmits images, but transforms them into a unique and powerful super-reality which has an independent life. McLuhan has described the nature of the television image, pointing out that it is not a still photograph in any sense. The image, says McLuhan, is formed by light passing through the screen at the viewer, the viewer forming the image by accepting a few of the three million dots per second transmitted to the receiver. The very fact that we call television a "medium" indicates the degree of control which we have over its dissemination.

Commercial films will probably evolve into multiple images, multi-screen presentations within their specially designed halls.

Rarely does the television experience involve coming to the set at a specific time for a specific program, sitting in front of the set and watching it for the length of the program, and then turning it off. This is the context-level approach, where the spectator and event are mutually restricted. At the process level the television set may be on constantly, with the program mood intermingling with the surroundings or a conversational one, with the television set in the background or in the room. At the context level, the viewer is free to choose the time and duration of watching the program, and to choose the program to suit his immediate needs.

The artist working in television has a vast new set of premises to consider when communicating his perceptions, premises which are similar to a painter's choice of canvas size, color, composition, and medium. These premises include the choice of audience, choice of message, duration of message, definition of image and sound, and the amount of repetitiveness versus "variety."

Artists are using television in a variety of ways: the actual making of programs and other material for on-air or theater gallery exposure; as a self-awareness device in happenings, performances, and educational contexts; as a device for making distorted and abstract images; and as an actual object in assemblage sculpture or an image in painting, collage and graphic works.

Notable in the area of programming was the nationally televised event program in March 1969, "The Medium Is the Medium," where six artists—Alan Kaprow, Nam June Paik, Otto Piene, James Suwairight, Thomas Tadlock and Abe Tambellini—made short tapes for the half-hour presentation. This project, conceived by Ann Greaser and Patricia Morris, using the Public Broadcasting Laboratory, used the studio facilities of WGBH-TV in Boston. The results of this experiment were disappointing because too few a period of time was allowed each artist to demonstrate a real command of the medium. When each artist finished his part of the presentation, the audience was aware of the artificiality and commercialism which characterizes the medium. It is evident that television is not a suitable medium for an artist who wishes to work with a time-dependent medium with great flexibility in control of both image and sound, says the artist.

James Suwairight's contribution to "The Medium Is the Medium" included a collaboration with his wife, Mimi Gardner, a dancer responsible for choreographing material, and Dovlet Arel, who was commissioned to compose the electronic music. In the beginning and middle sections of this "media" dance piece, two dancers—Mimi Gardner and Virginia Laddune—were shot in "negative" color and superimposed with reverberated image (see also front-cover illustration). In the concluding section, the camera image of the two dancers was broken down into three primary camera colors, each color being recorded on a separate video tape, Suwairight then mixed the three tapes, achieving multiple images with a feed-back time delay created by video-tape delay. "It is a great challenge to work with a time-dependent medium with great flexibility in control of both image and sound," says the artist.

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had planned to present identical events simultaneously with a major component in Marta Minujin's "Simultaneity in Simul-berg, David Tudor and Robert Whitman. Performances using TV being used by Oyvind Fahlström, Alex Hay, Robert Rauschen-ments in Art and Technology in October 1966, in New York-TV "9 Evenings-Theater and Engineering," sponsored by Experi-
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Television has been used as an awareness device in many con-
texts. It has been used in performances by five of the artists in "9 Evenings—Theater and Engineering," sponsored by Experi-
ments in Art and Technology in October 1966, in New York—TV being used by Oyvind Fahlström, Alex Hay, Robert Rauschen-
berg, David Tudor and Robert Whitman. Performances using TV have also been given by Paik, Pierre Tanguy, Siegel, Levine and Serge Boutourline. In the area of happenings, television was a major component in Marta Minujin’s "Simultaneity in Simul-
taneity" in Buenos Aires in 1966. Allan Kaprow and Wolf Vostel had planned to present identical events simultaneously with Minujin's, to occur in the United States and Germany, with inter-
action taking place between the three events, but the Kaprow and Vostel events did not take place. Kunwair used TV systems in two of his happenings in 1966 and 1968. Lee Levine has produced several television sculptures, Ice in 1968 and Contact in 1969, using live images of spectators on monitors. Levine has also used televi-
sion in many of his environmental works over the past four years to provide information about his environments. Other artists concerned with the documentary and education possibilities of television include Paul Rhyne, David Court, Frank Gillette, Iris Schneider and Serge Boutourline.

Another major area of television involvement for artists is the disabling of the normal function of the television receiver, turn-
ing it into a "canvas" for creating abstract patterns and distor-
tions of the transmitted image. Nan June Paik is the pioneer in this area, having had his first showing of abstract television images in Germany in 1963. Various projects in this area include: Boyd Mafford’s "Arlington," exhibited in 1967; Robert Kragun and Robert Lipman's "Come Unto Me," exhibited in 1968; Peter Sorensen's "Luminotic Paint Set," in 1968; Thomas Tad-
vice which, placed in front of a TV screen, senses changing pat-
ters and distorts abstract patterns on patterned plastic sheets for decorative effects. The instrument translates TV images into electrical energy capable of illuminating lamps or running motors.

Artists have for some time been using the TV set or its image in assemblages, collage and graphic works. Richard Hamilton's famous collage of 1956, This Is Tomorrow, which is a precursor of pop art, included an image of a TV set. Edward Kienholz in The Big Eye, exhibited in 1963, used a non-functioning console model television as part of an assemblage sculpture. In 1963, in a series of five painting-assemblages, Tom Wesselmann included working television sets. Wolf Vostel's TV-Diptych, a series of collage-assemblages exhibited in 1963, used functioning TV sets with vertical and horizontal controls out of adjustment. A group of six artists collaborated with Nan June Paik for his 1968 ex-
hibit at Galerie Bonino in New York to produce TV assemblages. Included were Otto Piene's metallic paizl-sized TV set, Roy Johnson's chair-TV, Christo's "wrapped" TV, Robert Beasen's photo-assemblages, Robert Rauschenberg's kinetic assemblage sculpture with toy automobiles, Ayo's cocktail-table television. Sculptor John Soory recently embedded a working TV set within a clear polyester block—as a comment on the proliferation of objects in society. The USCQ group projected slides of television images in "Imedia, Illumination" at New York's Whitney Museum in 1968. Lee Levine has produced a series of nine television prints this year as a by-product of his multiple-television sculptures, as well as a number of posters using the television image. But TV as subject matter now interests artists only incidentally— TV as a medium for artists to express their perception— that's where the excitement is. In the next few years there will be an increase in the number of channels—a UHF stations and on cable TV hookups. A growing group of artists will turn to tele-
vision, seeking to have a relevant and influential role in society. The combination of these factors portends the possibility of a whole new realm of "art" experiences opening up to an incredibly vast audience.

Eric Siegel is a young television artist with great technological command of the medium, having built his own cameras and special-effects box. Working since early 1965, his Psychodelevision is a series of black-and-white tapes ranging from abstract patterns to representational images. Among his tape arcs: Einstein, top (done in collaboration with Michael Krok), in which abstract patterns are created within the kind of a photograph of Einstein; a dance piece of Jenny Nipps, center, where positive voice feedback causes the echo effect of the image; and Symphonies of the Planets, bottom, where signals from a TV camera were fed back through the camera and distorted to create moving abstract patterns, accompanied by music. Siegel, impressed with the versatility of the TV medium, says "the picture tube is an excellent light machine."