

ARTFORUM

NEWS



Jaime Davidovich as "Dr. Videovich."

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JAIME DAVIDOVICH (1936–2016)

Jaime Davidovich, a video and installation artist based in New York who, before many others, recognized the emergence of cable TV in the 1970s as a polymorphous medium that could serve artists—and viewers—in extraordinary ways, died today from pancreatic cancer.

Davidovich was born in Buenos Aires. He studied at the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, the University of Uruguay, and New York's School of Visual Arts. Prior to video and television, Davidovich was a painter, exploring all the material and philosophical aspects surrounding the monochrome, which led to more expansive works investigating ephemerality and site-specificity. He moved to New York in 1964, and in 1976, helped found Cable SoHo and, in 1978, founded and was president of the Artists' Television Network. These platforms for the distribution of avant-garde thinking and programming via cable access was a way of "get[ting] out of the claustrophobic traditional art world," Davidovich told the *New York Times* in 1979. He was also the creator of Cable Soho's *The Live! Show* variety half-hour hosted by the artist's alter ego "Dr. Videovich," that ran from 1979 to 1984. *The Live! Show* owed as much to Ed Sullivan and Ernie Kovacs as it did to Dada and Situationism, and featured projects and performances from a wide range of makers and personalities, such as Laurie Anderson, Eric Bogosian, Mike Smith, Tony Oursler, Tim Maul, Walter Robinson, Linda Montano, Ann Magnuson, and Richard Hell.

Davidovich received grants from the NEA (1978, 1984, 1990) and the New York State Council on the Arts (1975, 1982). He was also the Joan Mitchell Foundation's "Creating a Living Legacy Artist" from 2013–14. In 2010 he was given a retrospective at ARTIUM, the Centro-Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporaneo in Spain. He has had many solo exhibitions at a number of New York galleries and institutions, such as the Bronx Museum of Art; Churner and Churner; Cabinet; and the American Museum of the Moving Image, and has participated in group exhibitions at New York's MoMA and the Whitney Museum; the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles; the Long Beach Museum of Art; and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid.

As critic Jacob Proctor said in the April 2015 issue of *Artforum* for the exhibition "Outreach: Jaime Davidovich, 1974–1984" at Chicago's Threewalls gallery, curated by art historian Daniel Quiles, "From our contemporary perspective, it can be hard to conjure the sense of potential artists felt when they first gained access to video- and television-production facilities in the 1960s and '70s. While many early artistic experiments in television took an explicitly oppositional stance toward the TV industry, Davidovich and his cohort devised clever ways to work *with* television rather than against it."

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