

TV in Congress Visual Anthropology Video in Philadelphia

The House of Representatives intends to run its own television system for recording Congressional activities. Such is the recommendation of the House Rules Committee in a 9-6 vote last February. Congress approved of the concept of House TV coverage last fall, after years of avoiding it.

The resolution was no surprise to those who supported an alternative plan for a network pool, made up of the three major networks and PBS, to share responsibility for the televising. The decision reflects the desire of Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill (D-Mass.) to keep the House floor clear of broadcasters. He was also granted authority to define who will control the recordings once they are made.

O'Neill and his backers on this issue consider the videotaping as a resource for the representatives—a reliable, untainted record of their proceedings. Its availability to, and use by, the public is merely a convenient by-product, and apparently an unappealing one.

Plans have been made for three fixed automatic cameras covering the House chamber, remote controlled by two or three technicians. It's a lot like a bank security system. To protect the Members from unflattering TV images, the cameramen shall only record the recognized speakers. Even then, camera use is subject to regulations.

Critics feel House coverage should be a public resource and something not done shabbily. They feel media professionals should be involved in the design and implementation of a worthwhile system. Broadcasts of the Canadian House of Commons, for example, are designed and staffed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The current plan's cheapness and restrictions also cause endless technical and legal problems. The lighting casts shadows and reflects off balding heads, but the representatives fear the increased heat of better illumination. The sound system is said to be terrible. O'Neill will be presiding over the question of access to the tapes. Finally,

attempts to solve the merely technical questions, by permitting test recordings by the networks have been continually confounded.

So, although Congress finally approved television coverage of its activities in October, 1977—in the wake of operational systems in 44 state legislatures—it has succeeded in postponing the inevitable until 1979, safely after the next elections.

Note: Ann Cooper, of the Congressional Quarterly has written two succinct and comprehensive articles on the televising of Congress in the CQ Weekly Report: Dec. 17, '77; Feb. 11, '78; and one on the Canadian House's broadcasts: Jan. 7, '78.

—Steve Spector

The National Institute of Education is spending approximately \$4.2 million for a children's program called "Freestyle." The target audience is children nine to 12 years-old.

"Freestyle" is designed "to reduce negative affects of sexual stereotyping on the development of children's interests and career aspirations," says Marylou Randour from NIE.

Endorsed by the National Education Association and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, "Freestyle" will be thirteen 30-minute shows produced in Los Angeles by PBS station KCET-TV. The air date is scheduled for October first 1978.

Plans are being made to add captions for the deaf.

Video is alive in Philadelphia, but in its infancy. The Walnut Street Theatre Film/Video Center is the magnet of video activities. Besides the Walnut, there are occasional video shows at Etage Gallery and the Institute of Contemporary Art. Nexus Gallery has received a grant to document their activities on video.

One of the major projects of Walnut Street Theatre is a series of mini-courses called, "Looking at Video," dedicated to the concept that educating an audience

to become video-literate is essential for the growth of video art.

The first mini-course included as guest lecturers: John Hanhardt, curator of Film and Video at the Whitney Museum of American Art, who spoke to the subject "What is Video?" and showed representative tapes; Joan Jonas whose tapes included "Organic Honey" and "Vertical Roll"; and Willoughby Sharp, with his self documentary conceptual art.

The second mini-course, scheduled for early May, will include guest lecturers Stan VanDer Beek, one of America's foremost experimentalists; Douglas Davis, art critic for *Newsweek* and a dedicated spokesman for video art; and Richard Foreman, outstanding playwright, director, and video artist.

Other video activities include a weekly Tuesday night Video Lounge where local independent video artists show their work. The Spring cycle has included work by Philadelphia video artists as well as presenting visiting artists such as Doris Chase. Future plans for the Video Lounge include an evening with Amy Greenfield, Anson Kenney, and the Best of the Best of Philadelphia Video.

The Video Lounge at the Walnut welcomes the submission of tapes for consideration for its Fall cycle. The tapes could be ½" or ¾" format.

For information contact Linda Stryker, video co-ordinator, Walnut Street Theatre Film/Video Center (215) 574-3580.

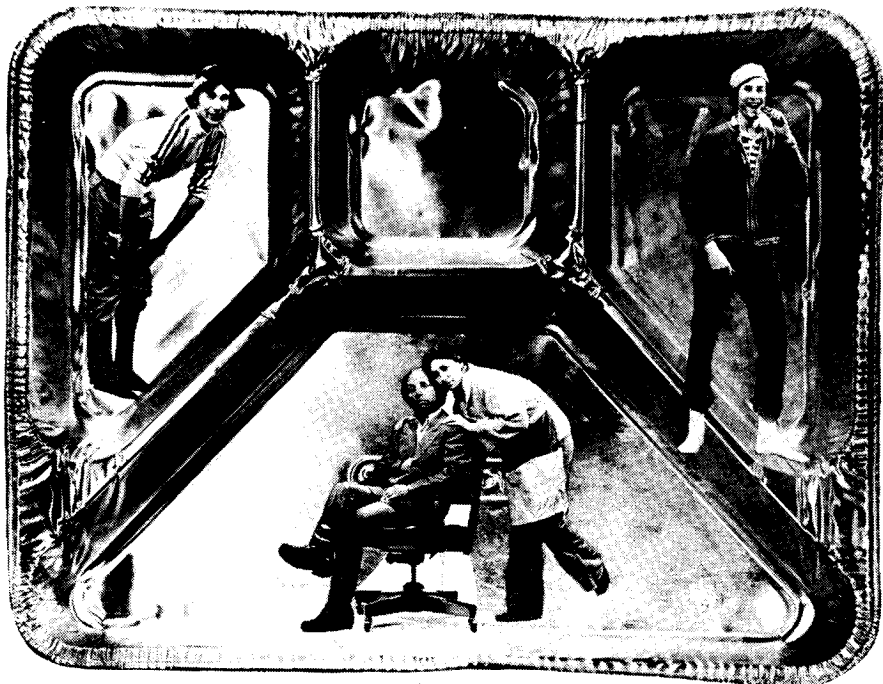
The Conference of Visual Anthropology was held at Temple University on March 8-11, under the affable and admirable direction of Jay Ruby and his staff. This event attracted some 700 persons from colleges, universities, non-profit institutions, and film and video houses. Well organized, in excellent facilities, an avalanche of film and video material demanded one's attention. For this reason, the excellent final program is a gem of a resource. It is annotated with total credits, running times and even the equipment used to create the film or video piece. Video was very much in evidence, shown in an auditorium with six monitors and one Advent up front.

Julie Gustafson and John Reilly presented *The Irish Tapes*, *The Politics of Intimacy* and *Giving Birth*. The next day Juan Downey was there with some stunning material on the *Guahibos*, an Amazon tribe. His technique and personal appearance were a highlight. Also screened were Nam Jun Paik's *Guadalcanal Requiem*, which was interesting but a trifle forced and affected. Woody and Steina Vasulkas blew everyone away with their *Codes of Electronic Imaging*. Evening programs included *Running Fence* by the Maysles Brothers, *DEAL* by John Schott and E.J. Vaughn (see review) and two documentaries by Werner Herzog after which a fiery discussion period was led by Amos Vogel. The Wednesday night program was *Summer Lights* and *Union Maids*.

It was a splendid affair with lots of chance for questions and a fascinating rolling program on the effect of the visual anthropologist on the culture recorded and the process of recording. The anthropology docs ran from MOMA's historic archives, through musical performances almost extinct, to Japanese and French ethnographic films, to work in progress, to satire and put-ons. It was great—write Jay Ruby at Temple to see if any of the annotated programs were left over. Offer to pay him—they're worth it.

—Ron Sutton

PHOTO BY STEVEN SCHOENBAUM



The TV Dinner was a video multi-image tape-showing and live performance at The American University in Washington, D.C. on April 8th and 9th. Produced by Elizabeth Daley and Larry Kirkman, the All-American fried chicken and jello mold dinner featured actors and live TV, portable crews, adverts and monitors, b&w/color, two hours of edited tape, photography and polaroids, a dance-video and live, and a theme song: *You're OK For TV*.