

## **"Willoughby Sharp's DOWNTOWN NEW YORK 1986"**

The 60 minute TV special, "Willoughby Sharp's DOWNTOWN NEW YORK 1986", will be shown at Ars Electronica Linz, Austria's international media festival on Friday, June 27th.

Combining the on-location segments produced by VideoLab President, Susan Britton, featured in the 13 week Manhattan Cable Television series, "THE WILLOUGHBY SHARP SHOW" and its current broadcast sequel, "CLIPS," with especially conceived bridges explaining the New East Village Culture, and introducing its most creative personalities, "DOWNTOWN" takes the TV audience on a fast-paced, entertaining trip into the exciting worlds of art, clubs, fashion, music, and more.

The "cast" reads like the New Culture's "Who's Who": Vito Acconci; Kathy Acker; Mary Adams; Laurie Anderson; Joey Arias; Paul Benney; Mike Bidlo; Bodi; Dianne Brill; Rhys Chatham; Alien Comic; Amy Downs; Eva Goodman; Ilona Granet; Tessa Hughes-Freeland; Katy K; The Kipper Kids; Stephen Lack; Marcus Leatherdale; Pheobe Legere; Robert Lund; Gracie Mansion; Carlo McCormick- Michael Musto; Joseph Nechvaial; Boris Policeband; Rick Prol; Sally Randall; Rockets Redglare; Rene Ricard; Roland; Rudolph; Stephan Saban; Arleen Schloss; John Sex; Sir Rodney (Sir); Stephen Sprouse; David Wajnarowicz; Andy Warhol; William Wegman, Nick Zedd; and Zoe. The "places"—L'Age D'Or, Area, Batislavia, Blue Willows, Cat Club, The Dress, 8BC, Hiro's, King Tut's Wah-Wah Hut, Limelight, Nasty Habits, Nirvana, Palladium" Piezo Electric, PPOW, 7A's, and The World—are landmarks in the new cultural environment.

For underwriting and technical support of this Willoughby Sharp/Susan Britton produced program, VideoLab expresses thanks to Time, Inc. American Telecommunications Corp., and the Manhattan Cable TV staff: Fred Ciccone, Executive Producer; Noreen Stout, Production Supervisor; and Edmond Chibeau, Dena Crane, Keith Gardner, David Goldberg, Phil O'Reilly, Mike Romero, and Peter Zasuly, Production; and Jody O'Brien, Kenneth Bowers, and Lawrence Lane, Post-Production.

### **Beyond Video Art**

"Willoughby Sharp's DOWNTOWN NEW YORK 1986" is my most recent endeavor to bring culture to the Culture. This 60 minute TV program, co-produced with my partner of five years, Susan Britton, is the "electromagnetic juice" squeezed from thousands of hours of highly demanding, collaborative work: covering most of the "hottest" Downtown events in the art galleries, the latenight clubs, the fashion houses, artist's studios and the streets; pre-production planning with all the principals; the television shoot itself (which during "The Willoughby Sharp Show" on Manhattan Cable Television involved the efforts of more than 50 individuals each week); the rough, "off-line" edit, piecing the best video bits together, running the dialogue underneath the flying video images, and choosing (or commissioning) the electronic music to create the right mood making the segment "work;" and the final, "on-line" production—finetune editing, A and B rolling, audio equalizing, computer graphics, special effects, timing, and slating with credits for TV broadcast (generally a few moments before actual airing to the potential 250,000 MCTV audience that we have been building up since Spetember 1985).

**THIS IS TELEVISION, BROADCAST TV, NOT VIDEO ART.**

It was paid for by Manhattan Cable TV, the New York subsidiary of Time Inc's TV arm, American Telecommunications Corp., the second largest cable TV system in the world, to compete against the networks, ABC, CBS and NBC, plus the other cable TV competition. It was totally envisioned, conceived, and produced by Susan Britton and myself (with enlightened creativity by the MCTV production crew). And it is owned in ALL markets by the producers, SB & 1, VideoLab partners. To survive, we must sell this work as television to television. Consequently, the aesthetic is basic, pragmatic, and direct:

- A) Examine (and experience) the environment (reality)
- B) Decide what in it is most interesting and important
- C) Reproduce this reality as faithfully as possible
- D) Or, in other words, "Give the culture back to itself".

Willoughby Sharp New York City, May 28, 1986

### **Statement for Ars Electronica**

"Downtown New York 1986", commissioned by Ars Electronica, is a small, but very juicy, slice of the nearly 26 hours of television programming created by Willoughby Sharp and myself over the past nine months. In producing "The Willoughby Sharp Show" and our current show, called "Clips", (the two programs for which "Downtown New York 1986" has been culled)" my ambitions have been to create authentically engaging television i.e. competitive television, while making television which is also complex and subtle. I mean complex and subtle like a good conversation, where lots of fertile speculation might be skillfully mixed up with equal parts of humour and originality.

Television is continually defined by budgets and deadlines and collaborative diplomacy. (I suppose as the budgets get bigger the collaborative diplomacy is less of an issue but deadlines definitely remain a constant.) Those aspects, which at first seemed to be constraining, (especially after a career in video art, which is just like regular art) gradually became liberating—because efficiency is liberating. And, whereas I was once thrilled to have made the "right" decision (speaking aesthetically) I am now thrilled to have made the "right" decision IMMEDIATELY (and also aesthetically).

Susan Britton, May 26, 1986