FRANK GILLETTE and IRA SCHNEIDER

PARTS I and II of an interview

by JUDY KALUT

JUD: How do painters and filmmakers get into video—how did you both get into it?

FRANK: I got into it when Fordham University—McMaster Libra's Media Center—whatever it was called—had some equipment on me for a year or so. Basically the unit was two studio cameras, two portable monitors, two playback decks, and two mixers, and about $300 worth of tape—that plus some regular recording equipment, various microphones, cords and addendum things. I had that equipment for two years in which I tried to do what I wanted to do. I was like an artist-in-residence concept in reverse—other women taking the residence out to the artist and giving it to him to work with. So I had four TV units for three months and I produced a few programs with it. That was my introduction to tape.

IRA: I got into video because I thought that the type of filming I wanted to do required particular ease and little stress on production whereas in filming, it was always difficult to get your sound without the use of a crew. What I wanted to do was being extremely and very loose and, I found it much easier to work with videotape equipment than with film equipment because basically you get everything down, and with communications, and you could do what you wanted to do afterwards. I've always had difficulty working with logging, budgets, and film editing and having to depend upon people to help me. Videotape puts down the size of the crew and provides you sound from the word "go." Another advantage to videotape is that if it is lost quality you didn't always have to lose. Somehow the media are different.

JUD: The immediacy of the television medium.

FRANK: Well, half-inch videotape was a technological compromise in a way. It is compact image definition for portability. You can make a portable videotape reasonable if you put the information on half-inch tape. It's the only studio tape that's portable. In terms of the television definition of resolution, 320 lines is a high-resolution picture. It's only a low-resolution picture when compared with, say, 560 lines of definition.

IRA: When we talk of 560 lines, which is standard broadcast television, we're talking about 560 at the point of transmission. By the time it's received by a set it's down to 320 lines. So there's not too much actual difference in the definition of a half-inch tape and standard broadcast.

JUD: Frank, what is your first work in television?

FRANK: The original proposal was to distribute the tape delay systems throughout the gallery, but because that would have involved other exhibits it was shifted, and the mural conception with the delay mechanisms on one wall was introduced.

IRA: The virtual reality of the television was the notion, in a way, of putting more channels out for broadcast—through the air. However, it suffers the same limitations as standard broadcast in the sense that it's regulated immediately by the FCC; therefore it's being prohibited and commercially monopolized as standard broadcast—but still brown to a certain number of channels.

IRA: And doing this period Frank existed on egg creams and marshmallow candies.

FRANK: IRA: That lasted three weeks. Then I experimented through the Village Project with the effectsof a number of films and other artist having migrated into the realm of television and videography, the entire spectrum that would have to be continued, may prove extremely useful in understanding this matter in perspective as we say, how will a color lines which this should range the entire broadening spectrum of media and intermedia.

IRA: The most important facet of WIPE CYCLE was the notion of information presentation, and the integration of the audience into the information.

JUD: Frank, what was your first work in television?

FRANK: Well, I had been doing monochrome minimal painting, dealing with concrete concepts, and I had coached a stache in painting. Along came the contract with Fordham and I first produced a film and a half hour documentary on St. Mark's Place. I spent two weeks standing on Fordham's roof top interviewing the locals. The documentary's conception was that it flowed from the inside out those people defining themselves, and not my going in and extracting information of which they're only as element. They basically gave their tapes on video.

IRA: And during that period Frank existed on egg creams and marshmallow candies.

FRANK: They last about two weeks. I experimented through the Village Project with the effects of videotape like in bad sports—19 or 20 year old friends and egg creams. We threw the camera on me, themselves, as a means of expression as opposed to a means of recording their expressions. They were interested from which they had to extricate themselves, and in us who saw the work on the St. Mark's Place. Videography was a new, available medium for them, they dug it. I also used videotape like a canvas, specifically about four hours of what I felt a self-portrait on videotape, that used four cameras with two feedback systems. There are points in the self-portrait where you see on tape me looking at myself on tape, looking at myself on tape. There were generations of feedback, and the gradual elimination from one's previously considered image into an underlying bodily image of oneself.

At a point in December, I met Fred, we discussed working together, and we went out to Antich College in January and February.

IRA: We were invited out by David Brooks, who was teaching in the film department and who managed to get in access to their TV studio equipment. We bought our own Sony portable equipment, and completed about 20 hours of taping, combining many approaches, in the studio and in the streets. The basic notion was that we were going out to meet an American subculture without any preconceptions and to work through interaction.

JUD: You had been filming and not working in television prior to this.

IRA: No, I stopped that summer when a film project fell through because of lack of funds. I was filming this British painter painting the SALVATION building in Sheridan Square and his interactions with the indigenous people, from him alone painting, to own fifty people dancing in the streets and discovering the photographs. I won't mention the cameraman's name, but he was an intricate associate, which multi- tangent the shots very difficult. Again with film you have to sprawl production among many people, and if you don't have an organized group, it becomes impossible.

IRA: Perhaps we should quickly run through these different television notions: CATV, CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) which is basically like Super 8 film, and they expect to be putting out entertainment albums on EVR, and a special apparatus on your TV receiver or monitor. I think their main interest in investing in this system is the immediacy of the television medium.

IRA: Although EVR (Electronic Video Recording) that CBS is coming out with may interfere with that I think EVR is another hype.

IRA: The potential of cable television (CATV) is that with adaptation you can send any signal over the line of transmission. By the time it's received by a set it's down to 320 lines. So there's not too much difference in the definition of a half-inch tape and standard broadcast.

IRA: Closed circuit television is best understood in terms of a stereosystem. A few years ago there were no portable equipment. You can have everybody running around with portable TVs like people running around with portable radios.

IRA: Of course you're saying that as a painter.

FRANK: Exactly. So with some minor adaptations, the essential attribute of videotape when it connects with CATV, where the audience is supplied with tape, is that it's basically like Super 8 film, and they expect to be putting out entertainment albums on EVR, and a special apparatus on your TV receiver or monitor. I think their main interest in investing in this system is that it is basically like Super 8 film, and they expect to be putting out entertainment albums on EVR, and a special apparatus on your TV receiver or monitor.

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IRA: The most important facet of WIPE CYCLE was the notion of information presentation, and the integration of the audience into the information.
FRANK: It was an attempt to demonstrate that you've got a piece of information in tomorrow morning's box, which you can see right now. And you take a satellite relationship to the information. And the satellite which is you is incorporated into the thing which is being sent back to the satellite—in other words, rearranging your experience of information reception.

IRA: It's a prototype model—

FRANK: It's a light feedback system that enables a viewer standing in his environment to see himself not only now in time and space, but also 2 seconds ago and 16 seconds ago, and these are in juxtaposition and in flux. In addition he sees standard broadcast images come on at certain periods after hitting his light image, and also two programmed shows which are collectively coming from a dot of light from outer space, thus going to 5th St. Somehow there's a juxtaposition between the now of the person, the individual, with other elements of information about the universe and America, and the previous periods seems to have been a somewhat objectifying experience, and also a somewhat integrating experience in terms of one's place in the universe.

FRANK: It's an attempt to refute this one-temporal experience—onesense of time and space.

IRA: yes, we seem to have a facility to abstract small sections of material in time and space, but also A seconds ago and 16 seconds ago, and these are in juxtaposition and in flux. Is it you is incorporated into the thing which is being sent back to the satellite—in other words, rearranging by him feeding the camera good vibes.

FRANK: I'm not as much interested in my work in pure abstraction as with the potential of TV for collage—

IRA: You, we are complex modes of all sorts of messages and signals, and one of these defines time-binding; the fact that we can look at and interpret artifacts by an Egyptian.

FRANK: Yes, one of the ideas for which we haven't found backing yet, would be a video chamber with a football game. 

IRA: Let's say, integration of the live audience onto pretaped material.

FRANK: One of the environmental TV projects we're in the process of designing for a football game.

IRA: Frank, I think, is in charge of generating vocabulary.

FRANK: There is the idea that everyone who has a television receiver will be capable of seeing the first step in the new way of seeing a gigantic, universal civilization of experience. Columbus didn't have that luxury. The entire world is with him literally, he's having his experience confirmed like nobody else has had his experience confirmed before he's going to be issued, not by more vibrato feedback his experiences are confirmed. The first motherfucker who hit the North Pole or Mount Everest, he says oil shit, this is his experience confirmed like nobody else has had his experience confirmed before. Like the first motherfucker who hit the North Pole or Mount Everest, he says oil shit, this is his experience confirmed like nobody else has had his experience confirmed before. The entire world is with him literally, he's having his experience confirmed like nobody else has had his experience confirmed before. The entire world is with him literally, he's having his experience confirmed like nobody else has had his experience confirmed before. The entire world is with him literally, he's having his experience confirmed like nobody else has had his experience confirmed before. The entire world is with him literally, he's having his experience confirmed like nobody else has had his experience confirmed before. The entire world is with him literally, he's having his experience confirmed like nobody else has had his experience confirmed before. The entire world is with him literally, he's having his experience confirmed like nobody else has had his experience confirmed before.

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