Videocommunity at Westbeth

To expand our just-started project we wish to develop a program of education conceived of by artists and their families. We will use video means to make instructional video tapes, to be first viewed by residents and then copied and distributed to N.Y. State video-educational centers and throughout the country and the world. We are co-ordinating distribution with Raindance.

An Educational Environment must have self-discipline with the time-freedom to explore at one's own pace; have local resources available for feedback, growth, reference, relaxation; have the well-made, serviceable tools that are understood by their users—respected but not worshipped.

On May 27th, Westbeth began broadcasting live and showing prerecorded 1/2" video tapes through its master antenna. There is an antenna outlet in each of the 383 living/studio apartments. Those residents who have connected their TV sets to this cable outlet are able to receive our broadcasts on Channel 3. There are over 150 TV sets now connected and receiving Channel 3. The number is growing each day and week.

Broadcasts originate from Studio H-354, where the video signal from the recorder is transferred to a radio signal (because of a RF Modulator inside the deck) that travels over a co-ax cable into the master antenna system, where it is directed to Channel 3. There, the signal is amplified and transferred with all the other broadcast signals—flying via cable into every apartment. The master antenna system was built into the building's electrical wiring. The video equipment is a portable pack deck, 1 monitor, both owned but not paid for by Ann Douglass. The video camera, RF modulator, and amplifier are borrowed.

We have already made 15 tapes. We have opened our studio and broadcast weekly to the video community, (Thursday nights at 8 p.m.) Informally, they talk with residents, exchange information, educate us about video tape, educate each other and show what tapes they please.

Recorders are available in studio/living privacy, where residents can record conversations, fun, experiment. Equipment available to children to work independent of adult direction.

Inter-building exchange; international cooking; plant-growing; repair; clever ideas for improving living space, etc.

Recorders available to residents to take with them: to visit other artists to important conferences to music events, or just for the fun of it.

Porta-pack for use in community immediately around Westbeth (See Summer Program).

Program Broadcasting: to develop a model for community broadcasting. We are the first building to offer free, unsponsored video broadcasting, with complete access to the studio. We are training all interested in using the equipment. There are already 100 people here who know how to operate a porta-pack and run tapes. The studio is open to all residents, management, and staff. Our channel is open to video community.

(We have already shown work from Videofreex, Raindance, Space, Global Village, Peoples Video Theater, Alternative Media Project, Vega (Ithaca, Cornell) Jackie Cassen, Video House (Washington, D.C.).

Video making at Westbeth to include the following: live broadcast of tenant/meeting management meetings, (now limited to 20 people). We need cable and boosters to be able to broadcast live from the public spaces in the building. (The monthly meeting is held in the cabaret) 900 feet from present cable; to have recorders available to performers at development and rehearsal stages, so they can judge the effectiveness of their work: recorders to tape our public performances: festivals, dance concerts, etc.

To train 2 residents in TV repair, followed by instructional how-to tape for national distribution to libraries, video centers, etc.

SUMMER PROGRAM Because our feedback has been instructional, supportive, and imaginative, we want to continue this program without pause.

Summer projects wanted:

Community neighborhood is 14th St. to 7th Ave.: 7th Ave. to Canal and to River. Some residents are in panic over personal security (muggings and robberies). We want to educate our neighbors about art and how we live, and to educate ourselves toward better understanding of our neighbors. (They include street gangs, gay cruisers, straight people, meat packers: a very poor neighborhood to the south, truck drivers and warehouse attendants). We want to work with them and the established community associations; such as, churches, block associations, small businessmen, neighboring artists; Bella Abzug; the 6th precinct; other local theaters and concert halls; and hospitals all directed toward a more informative, yet informal, understanding with our neighbors.

Rent is needed for present studio. We have been offered free studio space from Westbeth on the top floor of A building overlooking the river. To make this space workable, we will need money for locks, minimal building supplies, lighting. In either case, we will need reimbursement for material presently loaned (about $200 worth on loaned equipment); about $200 for building material.

Also for:

—continuing live broadcasting;
—continuing playing tapes as they come in from around the world.
—beginning to tape graphics arts collective: instructional tapes; how to set up a collective tape;
—beginning to make other education/information tapes, i.e., to develop our program along its natural lines; to be free to have equipment and tape to go where we want to; to develop the media experimentally and continually;
—extending cable beyond Westbeth into neighborhood.
We are in process of investigating technical feasibility, FCC regulations do not apply to area within 15 block radius. Community demand and awareness are accelerating. Receiving Manhattan Cable and Teleprompter service at great discount. Supplying these Cable Franchise companies with Community broadcasting from Westbeth.

—Cable to work with Citizen's Committee.
Request money for feasibility study and negotiation time.