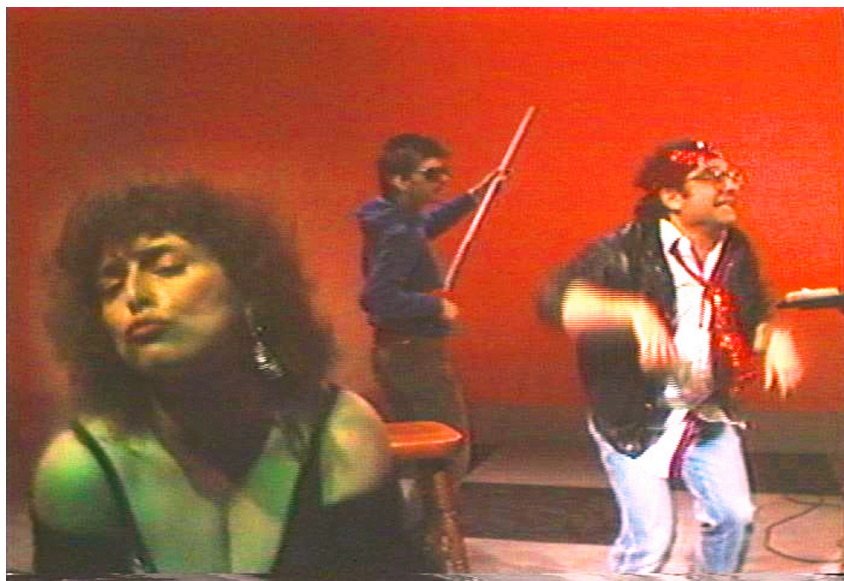


Winnipeg Babysitter

A live projection event by
Daniel Barrow



centre
for
art
tapes

North End Church
7 pm Friday February 15th 2008

WINNIPEG BABYSITTER

Curated by Daniel Barrow

For the past 2 years, Daniel Barrow has been researching, compiling and archiving a history of independently produced television in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In the late '70s and throughout the 80s, Winnipeg experienced a "golden age" of public access television. Anyone with a creative dream, concept or politic would be endowed with airtime and professional production services. A precedent was set in the late '70s when the infamous, Winnipeg performance artist Glen Meadmore sat in front of a television camera and silently picked at his acne for 30 minutes each week in a program called *The Goofers* (later *The Glen Meadmore Show*). *Winnipeg Babysitter* traces this and other unique vignettes from a brief synapse in broadcasting history when Winnipeg cable companies were mandated to provide public access as a condition of their broadcasting license.

The local public access archives were destroyed when larger cable companies gradually bought the smaller ones, and consequently the programs could only be found in the VHS collections of the original producers. In cases when these producers did not save their own work, Barrow had to rely on television collectors, fans and enthusiasts. In this regard, *Winnipeg Babysitter* is an archival project that restores a previously lost history.

The work from this program can be located in an under-recognized zone outside the mainstream of art and video circulation. While some of the artists from the program have since established tremendous critical success (notably Guy Maddin, Kyle McCulloch, and the members of the Royal Art Lodge), it should be noted that every producer included in this program was driven entirely by creativity and enthusiasm without any commercial participation in either the art world or any television industry. The artists of *Winnipeg Babysitter* are unified by the idea of presenting work voluntarily in a public realm.

This program provides a critical framework for work that has been often misunderstood by the general public and overlooked by the art world. *Winnipeg Babysitter* addresses histories of open airwaves, grass-roots and D.I.Y. culture, 1980s queer politics, and the Winnipeg "prairie gothic" sensibility. Many of the featured programs were designed to provoke and were, as a consequence, maligned or censored in the 1980s for their experimental or transgressive content.

Most Winnipeg public access programming, however, was created specifically to delight and entertain a diverse audience. Winnipeg Babysitter has recently been described as “jaw-droppingly entertaining” (Toronto Xtra) and “screamingly funny” (cbc.ca) and has received tremendous interest from the media, universities, galleries and festivals.

The broad appeal of Winnipeg Babysitter stems partly from the fact that the producers included in this program represent incredibly diverse segments of a community. This program features work made by:

- teenagers (The Hardy Weinberg Comedy Show)
- many programs produced by senior citizens (The Cosmopolitan Time, Cooking With Fran, and What's New Pussycat)
- television created by world-renowned artists (Survival by Greg Klymkiw, featuring Guy Maddin's earliest recorded performances, as well as early sketch-comedy series by the Royal Art Lodge)
- radical queers (The Glen Meadmore Show and The Pollock & Pollock Gossip Show)
- and a host of other cult classics that subsequently became urban legends when the Winnipeg public access paradigm was axed in the 1990s.

The curator travels to each screening and provides a “magic lantern” commentary/context (using an overhead projector), tracing the histories of public access television in Manitoba, and describing the various and outrageous biographies of each television producer and personality. Winnipeg Babysitter is a program that requires 2 screens: the video projection on a main theatre screen, with Barrow's hand crafted, overhead-projected liner notes on an adjacent, smaller screen. This style of commentary is deliberate; it is less intrusive and more respectful of the video images than a voice-over. The hand-turned transparency pages also provide an appropriate edge of the personal, the unrehearsed and the homegrown to complement the ad hoc nature of public access television. Barrow's performance alongside of the video image is integral to the goals of the program, providing depth and context to these video artifacts.

Please see links to reviews of this program at:
<http://www.danielbarrow.com/blog.htm>

Daniel Barrow is a Winnipeg-based media artist, working in performance, video and installation. He has exhibited widely in Canada and abroad. Recently, Barrow has exhibited at The Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), New Langton Arts (San Francisco), and The Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver).

Since 1993, Barrow has used an overhead projector to relay ideas and short narratives. Specifically, he creates and adapts comic book narratives to a “manual” form of animation by projecting, layering and manipulating drawings on mylar transparencies. Barrow variously refers to this practice as “graphic performance, live illustration, or manual animation.”

Cover Image: A scene from the notorious Winnipeg cable TV show, 'The Pollock & Pollock Gossip Hour.'

The Centre for Art Tapes would like to take this opportunity to thank the Programming Committee for their support and initiatives:

Sol Nagler, Robert Bean, Andrea Young, Marie Koehler, Stephen Kelly, Suzanne Caines, Meridith Dault & Ariella Pahlke.



5600 Sackville St.,
Suite 207
(CBC Radio Building)
Halifax, NS, B3J 1L2
Tel 902-420-4002
www.centreforarttapes.ca



Canada Council
for the Arts



NOVA SCOTIA
Tourism, Culture and Heritage

