

We could realize objectively the particular and unique quality of each moment, as well as its instantaneous transmutation. Of course infinite and continuously changing unique instants make up the entirety of our existence, but it is only rarely that we are brought into a direct awareness of this awesome aspect of reality.

Nordman's piece sponsored by LAICA represents one of the institution's most successful uses of an "alternative" space, a recycled urban site outside the traditional art context, fully integrated into the life of the neighborhood and serving the art audience as well. *One Day Only; Dawn to Dusk* at Berkeley was exemplary in that the museum was willing to alter its usual mode of operation, allowing both itself and its visitors to experience something other than everyday reality through a heightened awareness of everyday reality.

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Video

TOUCH DON'T TOUCH DON'T TOUCH NOW DON'T

Peter D'Agostino went to Columbus, Ohio like Dorothy to the Wizard of Oz. Having read all the tidy accolades served up by the press, he'd expected to find a truly interactive Qube system there. He thought that he'd find Warner Communications, Qube's parent company, intuiting audience needs, trying to provide more astute programming. What he found was something else.

That Qube considers itself to be two-way "interactive" cable T.V. is absurd. That the notion is so naively accepted by others is frightening. As we rush headlong into the guts of 1984, it seems essential to remember how our perceptions are limited by available information. As D'Agostino noticed, the compliments paid to "the next step in home entertainment" were drafted almost verbatim from the press kit. Therefore, the information

about Qube was provided by Qube's professional publicity peddlers doing their utmost to convince an audience of its involvement.

To confront Qube is to take on other windmills, as well; for Qube functions as an extension of the McLuhanesque canon, "The medium is the message," translated to *The Console Is The Content*. According to McLuhan, the very nature of T.V. is participatory and involved. On the other hand, he holds that literature is "detached," and moveable type, obsolete. Given the number of bestsellers McLuhan has written, such a remark may raise a few eyebrows in irony. But such media observations have passed as dogma for the last decade. D'Agostino is attempting to redefine some of the established video jargon. He questions whether the ongoing multiple choice quiz given by Qube really constitutes "participation." Especially since the choices, like the information, are defined by their triviality.

The videotape that D'Agostino created for Qube broadcast deals with the issues of feedback and ideology and has been successfully ignored up to now. True feedback generates responses that might bring about changes at Qube. After the initial hollow encouragement to work with their "interactive" facilities, D'Agostino was treated to a round of bureaucratic excuse-making. When he was denied air-time on the educational channel, he asked about Public Access. He was informed that Qube programming, in effect, was Public Access, but for the fact that they organize it.

D'Agostino found his piece being recontextualized for the game/talk show format of Columbus Alive. There, safely wedged between some moderately controversial author and Susan Goldwater, the hostess, his tape could have been edited by the audience. This would have served to discredit his intentions and render his position less serious. It was not the appropriate quality of air-time for his proposal . . . rather like having a newspaper story rewritten for the Letters to the Editor page. To date, D'Agostino's videotape has not been broadcast on Qube.

The attempt to put D'Agostino's artwork on such a banal sort of program just underscores Qube's unabashedly commercial ideology. At last report, Qube was being received by more than 20,000 homes in Columbus — the ideal test market town. But the demographics were skewed to cover the upper middle-class predominantly white neighborhood of Upper Arlington. The economics of marketing Qube to such an area are as clear as flow charts.

Qube is expensive, with the average bill running upwards of \$50.00 a month. Instead of the flat fee charged by most cable systems, Qube charges by the

program. With soft-core porn at \$4.00 and the Buckeyes football at \$9.00 each, a Qube subscription requires a well-padded income. So two-way T.V. only "interacts" with the privileged minority and "participation" remains undemocratic, at best.

Yet, the specific responses of even a skewed audience are invaluable to the advertising industry. One of the most questionable aspects of the cable system is "Qubesuming," with its 2 minute "qubits" and 8 minute "informercials." These disguised commercials pose as "interviews" or "travelogues" to better sell their wares — participation is reduced to a choice of goods or services, a possible choice of promotional brochures, and of course, the choice of ordering direct from the Qube, billed to your Master Charge.

So what's new? T.V. has always been a very saleable product, scarcely pretending to have nutritional value. But it is Qube's conceit that it presents a worthwhile service when it looks more like an underexamined and dangerous operation. Plugging individuals into the computer may give the illusion of closer contact but it's mere chicanery. It allows for an ever greater degree of audience manipulation. Qube knows specifically what program is chosen by which home, who "interacts" at what time and for what reasons — a heavy erosion of privacy and one that people actually pay to introduce to their homes.

D'Agostino believes that as long as these issues have surfaced and been recognized, the situation is workable. The two-way cable system has incredible positive potential. But the dangers are very real and need to be exposed. D'Agostino's video dialogue with Qube will be shown with tapes by Charlemagne Palestine and John Caldwell as a three man installation at the Long Beach Museum of Art from September 5th.

Hunter Drohojowska

Proposal for QUBE

It's those blank TV and movie screens that interest me most. When they're turned off, there's never a trace — no evidence of what has transpired. Their effect on consciousness is only a matter of literary speculation.

Proposal for QUBE was presented as