

CHURNER *and* CHURNER

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

Jaime Davidovich: 'Museum of Television Culture'

By Holland Cotter

Published: December 19, 2013

Churner and Churner

205 10th Avenue, between 22nd and 23rd Streets, Chelsea

Through Saturday

Back in the 1970s and '80s, there was no question about who New York's premier artist was. Rene Moncada. How did you know? Because he said so repeatedly in public for years by painting the words "I Am The Best Artist," followed by his signature, in very large letters on many blank SoHo walls. These self-hype murals are no longer extant. But you can catch a glimpse of them — and him — in "The Live! Show," an early cable television program conceived, produced, directed, scripted, hosted and promoted by the Conceptual artist Jaime Davidovich.

The show, which ran from 1979 to 1984, had many facets, as is evident from the vintage video outtakes on view at Churner and Churner. These included "celebrity" interviews with downtown types (Laurie Anderson, Gregory Battcock, Eric Bogosian); performances (Robert Kushner does a jaunty nude turn); art lessons (how to paint Ronald Reagan); and home shopping segments, with Mr. Davidovich hawking itty-bitty odds and ends he called videokitsch. (There's a selection at the gallery.) He also routinely took the show out of the studio (his apartment?) and into the street, where, wearing a beret, he schmoozed with both little people and superstars, Mr. Moncada being in the second category.

It has been said that the art world, like American culture, from which it is inseparable, is so extreme in its crassness and cluelessness as to defy satire. This is not so. Mr. Davidovich brilliantly nailed it 30 years ago and in terms every bit as pertinent now as then. And he made it look like fun, which remains a heroic accomplishment.

A version of this review appears in print on December 19, 2013, on page C26 of the New York edition with the headline: JAIMIE DAVIDOVICH: 'Museum of Television Culture'.