

production was domesticated at the AA in this way, the medium had already been adopted as a pedagogical model elsewhere within the school. All roads lead to the unit system.

Illustrating the collapse of architectural education into the remit of the page and the screen, the April 1973 issue of *Architectural Design* documented the recent adventures of the AA and Polyark.⁵² Price's sequel to the Potteries Thinkbelt, Polyark's proposal for a national, mobile network of British architectural schools was, we will recall, an inspiration of Boyarsky's IID; here, it resurfaces as a catalyst for pedagogical experiment at the AA, mentioned only in passing in the previous chapter. A few months earlier, Peter Murray, the magazine's Technical Editor and Middleton's successor (the network is endless) had decided to put Polyark to the test. With the initial aim of establishing a mobile "extension of *AD*" comprising audio and visual documentation, Murray invited Price and a group of AA students from a First Year unit to jumpstart the project. The itinerary: a two-week tour of architecture schools across Great Britain. It was "a travelling road show that would entertain as well as stimulate discussion," according to Murray,⁵³ who cited Ken Keasey and the Merry Pranksters as precedents.⁵⁴ Quite literally, this "cross-fertilization" of *AD*, the AA, and Polyark was mobilized through the AA students' conversion of a Routemaster bus into living quarters, replete with audio-visual equipment and a video library whose collection grew as students recorded their interactions at each stop on the tour [figs. 3.24, 3.25]. As such televisual

⁵² The project first emerged as the "National Schools Plan." See Cedric Price, "National Schools Plan," *Architects' Journal* (25 May 1966): 1282–83.

⁵³ Editorial statement for "Cosmorama," *Architectural Design* (April 1973): 200.

⁵⁴ Peter Murray, Polyark promotional statement, Folder x35 (Polyark), Cedric Price Fonds, Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA).

transactions unfolded, the frontiers of the educational project were drawn and redrawn. Even after the tour was complete this process was to continue, as Price identified the AA's video catalogue as a resource for his mobile school and its subsequent "traveling road shows."⁵⁵

Yet, the true vitality of the role of television and video in the *AD/AA/Polyark* collaboration is precisely conveyed by the very nature of Price's participation in the event. For it was only in the form of a video recording that Price attended the bus tour [fig. 4.19]. Commenting on his immaterial presence, the disembodied Polyark director informed attendees that the "value of videotape is similar to the value of magazines on a dentist's table—that is, you can use this film when you can't think of anything better to do." Issuing a further didactic imperative to the students, he argued that the "learning process is one in which one should be able to rethink the direction one is going in without recrimination or losing points or not getting medals."⁵⁶ Here, Price proposed a fundamental departure from the structural principles underlying the BBC's *Master Builders* televised "lectures," in which the sites of both the production and reception of content were presumed fixed. Alternatively, Price reinterpreted media (magazines and video) as a constant—and in fact, available at a whim. In this way, Price implied, video advanced a rewiring of architectural education as a continuous yet highly efficient process, rather than as a finite trajectory towards a static body of knowledge. It is a

⁵⁵ In Price's archive, documentation pertaining to Polyark includes a listing of the AA's video catalogue. "Catalogue of Videotapes," Communications Unit, October 1976, Folder x35 (Polyark), Cedric Price Fonds, CCA.

⁵⁶ Cedric Price, transcription of video from bus tour video library, in "*AD/AA/Polyark* Bus Tour," *Architectural Design* (April 1973): 203.

Seeded Content – **Television in the United States - Encyclopedia Britannica**
<https://www.britannica.com/art/television-in-the-United-States>

Television in the United States, the body of television programming created and broadcast in the United States. American TV programs, like American popular culture in general in the 20th and early 21st centuries, have spread far beyond the boundaries of the United States and have had a pervasive influence on global popular culture.

Introduction television was first regarded by many as “radio with pictures,” public reaction to the arrival of TV was strikingly different from that afforded the advent of radio. Radio in its early days was perceived as a technological wonder rather than a medium of cultural significance. The public quickly adjusted to radio broadcasting and either enjoyed its many programs or turned them off. Television, however, prompted a tendency to criticize and evaluate rather than a simple on-off response.

One aspect of early television that can never be recaptured is the combined sense of astonishment and glamour that greeted the medium during its infancy. At the midpoint of the 20th century, the public was properly agog about being able to see and hear actual events that were happening across town or hundreds of miles away. Relatively few people had sets in their homes, but popular fascination with TV was so pronounced that crowds would gather on the sidewalks in front of stores that displayed a working television set or two. The same thing happened in the typical tavern, where a set behind the bar virtually guaranteed a full house. Sports events that might attract a crowd of 30,000 or 40,000 suddenly, with the addition of TV cameras, had audiences numbering in the millions. By the end of television’s first decade, it was widely believed to have greater influence on American culture than parents, schools, churches, and government—institutions that had been until then the dominant influences on popular conduct. All were superseded by this one cultural juggernaut.

The 1950s was a time of remarkable achievement in television, but this was not the case for the entire medium. American viewers old enough to remember TV in the ’50s may fondly recall the shows of Sid Caesar, Jackie Gleason, Milton Berle, and Lucille Ball, but such high-quality programs were the exception; most of television during its formative years could be aptly described, as it was by one Broadway playwright, as “amateurs playing at home movies.” The underlying problem was not a shortage of talented

writers, producers, and performers; there were plenty, but they were already busily involved on the Broadway stage and in vaudeville, radio, and motion pictures. Consequently, television drew chiefly on a talent pool of individuals who had not achieved success in the more popular media and on the young and inexperienced who were years from reaching their potential. Nevertheless, the new medium ultimately proved so fascinating a technical novelty that in the early stages of its development the quality of its content seemed almost not to matter.

Fortunately, the dearth of talent was short-lived. Although it would take at least another decade before areas such as news and sports coverage approached their potential, more than enough excellence in the categories of comedy and drama emerged in the 1950s to deserve the attention of discriminating viewers. They are the most fondly remembered of the Golden Age genres for both emotional and intellectual reasons. Live TV drama was, in essence, the legitimate theatre's contribution to the new medium; such shows were regarded as "prestige" events and were afforded respect accordingly. The comedies of the era are remembered for the same reason that comedy itself endures: human suffering and the ever-elusive pursuit of happiness render laughter a necessary palliative, and people therefore have a particular fondness for those who amuse them.

The Golden Age: 1948–59 Getting started

Until the fall of 1948, regularly scheduled programming on the four networks—the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS; later CBS Corporation), the National Broadcasting Co. (NBC), and the DuMont Television Network, which folded in 1955—was scarce. On some evenings, a network might not offer any programs at all, and it was rare for any network to broadcast a full complement of shows during the entire period that became known as prime time (8–11 pm, Eastern Standard Time). Sales of television sets were low, so, even if programs had been available, their potential audience was limited. To encourage sales, daytime sports broadcasts were scheduled on weekends in an effort to lure heads of households to purchase sets they saw demonstrated in local appliance stores and taverns—the venues where most TV viewing in America took place before 1948. Although a television set cost about \$400—a substantial sum at the time—TV was soon "catching on like a case of high-toned

scarlet fever,” according to a March 1948 edition of *Newsweek* magazine. By autumn of that year, most of the evening schedules on all four networks had been filled, and sets began appearing in more and more living rooms, a phenomenon many credited to comedian Milton Berle. Berle was the star of TV’s first hit show, *The Texaco Star Theatre* (NBC, 1948–53), a comedy-variety show that quickly became the most popular program at that point in television’s very short history. When the series debuted, fewer than 2 percent of American households had a television set; when Berle left the air in 1956 (after starring in his subsequent NBC series *The Buick-Berle Show* [1953–55] and *The Milton Berle Show* [1955–56]), TV was in 70 percent of the country’s homes, and Berle had acquired the nickname “Mr. Television.”

George Burns and Gracie Allen, 1958. Television was still in its experimental stage in 1948, and radio remained the number one broadcast medium in terms of profits, audience size, and respectability. Most of the big stars of radio—Jack Benny, Bob Hope, and the team of George Burns and Gracie Allen, for example—were at first reluctant to risk their substantial careers on an upstart medium like television. Berle, on the other hand, had not had much success on the radio and had little to lose by trying his luck with TV. The reluctant stars would, of course, soon follow his lead.

Early genres

As more television sets began to be sold, a question arose: what sort of programming could fill the networks’ airtime? Because television, like motion pictures, was characterized by moving images and synchronized sound, one natural style to emulate was that of Hollywood films. But movies were expensive, time-consuming productions that required multiple sets and locations. Not yet turning a profit with their TV divisions, the broadcast networks (still dominated by their radio components) could not afford to make little movies for nightly broadcast. Furthermore, until the mid-1950s, Hollywood studios wanted little to do with this threatening new medium. Radio provided another possible programming model. Many early TV shows were in fact based on radio programs, some of which were even simulcast for years on both media. In many cases, however, images that could be implied with sound on radio were impossible to produce cheaply for cameras. Early television broadcasters, therefore, searched for events that could be shot easily and inexpensively. Because videotape did not come into widespread use until the 1960s, very early

programmers relied on live transmissions of musical performances, sporting events, sermons, and even educational lectures to fill their limited schedules.

Variety shows

After a period of experimentation, the immediacy of live television led programmers to turn to the theatre, especially vaudeville. Before the advent of radio and sound movies, vaudeville had been the most popular of the performing arts in the United States. Traveling shows circulated through cities and towns, providing live entertainment consisting of an emcee and a variety of acts, including musicians, comics, dancers, jugglers, and animals. Many former vaudevillians had become the stars of radio variety shows, and the vaudeville format promised to be even more amenable to television. Vaudeville-inspired variety shows could be shot live with a minimum of inexpensive sets, and there was still a significant pool of vaudeville-trained performers eager to work again.

Sammy Davis, Jr., on an episode of *The Ed Sullivan Show*, Jan. 6, 1963. By the 1949–50 season, the three highest-rated television programs were variety shows: *The Texaco Star Theatre* (NBC, 1948–53), Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* (CBS, 1948–71; renamed *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1955), and *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts* (CBS, 1948–58). Within a few years, entertainers such as Jackie Gleason, Dinah Shore, Perry Como, Red Skelton, and George Gobel would headline their own popular variety series. Common elements to most such shows included an emcee, a live audience, a curtain, and a steady stream of guests ranging from recording stars to comedians to classical musicians.

The variety format allowed for a wide range of styles. In contrast to the raucous pie-in-the-face antics of shows such as *The Texaco Star Theatre*, for example, was *Your Show of Shows* (NBC, 1950–54), an urbane comedy-variety program produced by Broadway legend Max Liebman and starring an ensemble of versatile character actor-comics that included Sid Caesar, Imogene Coca, Carl Reiner, and Howard Morris. A variety of acts punctuated this 90-minute program, including excerpts from operas and ballets, but it is most remembered for its superbly written and acted comedy sketches. Many of the cast members went on to star in another variety show, *Caesar's Hour* (NBC, 1954–57), which included among its writing staff future film directors Woody Allen and Mel Brooks as well as playwright Neil Simon.

strongest, its ambitions at a peak, and its programming at its most diverse, airing fairly consistently at one o'clock each weekday afternoon.⁶⁴ Aside from general announcements, its broadcasts included films and videos made by students and of students' unit work, replays of off-air television programs and feature films, live footage of oversubscribed events held in the lecture hall, and taped recordings of recent lectures. Original programming included interviews and discussions staged within the studio, exposing viewers to personalities visiting the AA, and whom they might not have had the opportunity to encounter face-to-face. Wired to the studio, to a camera in the school lecture hall, to a fixed television monitor on the first floor in the Back Members' Room, as well as other unfixed monitors placed variably within the school, the control room broadcast both live and recorded programs from within and to the AA. Pumping through cables that literally burst through doorways, corridors and windows, this televisual material crawled and penetrated the interior surfaces of the AA's Georgian home, yielding an intramural topology of information whose structural ambitions "cross-fertilized" with those of the *Events List*.

And so again: it is information that produces the architecture school. By "scanning" TVAA's broadcasts, we can assess the institutional effects of this architectural and programmatic dispersal of televisual production, consumption, transmission and reproduction at the AA. Consider, then, the following clips, which recast a number of characters who have made guest appearances elsewhere in this dissertation, and whose reappearances on TVAA underscore the role of media as a

⁶⁴ With the launch of TVAA the AA began to regularly record its public lectures and events, resulting in an incredible video archive that contains material dating from the mid-1970s to the present day.

structural constant over against the pedagogical, ideological and discursive variables coursing throughout all registers the AA's system of architectural education.

Title sequence: The logo for TVAA appears embedded within a collage of architectural magazine covers: *A+U*, *Architectural Forum*, *Casabella*, *Building Design*, *Domus*, *Architectural Design*, *The Architect*. “Allegro non troppo” from Malcolm Arnold’s *English Dances* (1951) provides the musical accompaniment. As the score closes, the wallpaper of magazines—an informatic “cladding” that reinforces that of the *Events List* posted on the walls of the Information Centre—fades into a title screen that reads, “ARCHItectural MAGazineS.” Price is named as the host for this episode, which aired on March 11, 1975.⁶⁵ Cut to Price in the AA Communications Studio. He is seated at a table covered with magazines, bits of paper, an ashtray and a glass (presumably filled with brandy)—another table, another set of props. Behind him a dark curtain serves as a backdrop [figs. 4.23, 4.24].

“I use magazines very greedily,” Price immediately declares, speaking directly to the camera, “primarily in order to achieve economy in time.” A similar declaration had been rehearsed earlier at Polyark, just as it had been by Greene and Myers in Intermediate Unit 6, and indeed by Boyarsky in multiple institutional settings. But as this episode of “Archi-Mags” unfolds, a further economy of both architecture and media begins to surface. For television frames an architectural discourse on print in a McLuhanesque “cross-fertilization,” as one medium becomes the content of another. Conducting himself with a hint of restraint, Price glances furtively at a scrap of paper on

⁶⁵ Cedric Price, episode of “Archi-Mags,” 11 March 1975, Architectural Association Video Archive (AAVA). The episode was aired on 11 March 1975, but recorded on 6 March 1975, according to the AAVA records.

the table, ostensibly covered in notes, which he traces delicately with his finger; in his other hand, the obligatory cigar. Before he begins his discussion of the magazines he reads regularly, he offers a word of warning to the audience. For he is “not particularly interested in other architects’ views of architecture,” nor is he “interested in looking at detailed architectural photographs or indeed plans of chosen beautiful buildings.”

Instead Price would prefer to see “a third-rate building being built than a first-rate one in the pages of magazines.”⁶⁶ Commenting on the quality of illustrations and content, as well as the talents of individual editors, his demeanour loosens up considerably as he strays from his notes and delves into the periodicals before him: from *Architectural Design* to *Country Life*, from *Building Design* to *New Society*, from *Underground Services*, the journal of the London Subterranean Survey Association, to the journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects. As he is keen to note, not only does he receive a number of publications free by virtue of being a member of certain institutions, but the magazines themselves were often the sole reason for his membership. For in their delivery of information they often outperformed the activities of their host institution—a mediatic eclipse that seemingly paralleled his preference for photographs of architectural process over images of completed, built work, but also unwittingly resonated with the media network to which he was presently subordinate.

For Price, in the role of host, the table functions both as a pedestal for the hand-picked array of magazines over which he reigns and as the stage from which he commands our attention. The scene of the “well-laid table” is by now a familiar one,

⁶⁶ Cedric Price, episode of “Archi-Mags.” For a full transcription, see Cedric Price, “Architectural Magazines: Transcript of a TVAA Recording 6 March, 1975,” transcribed by Henderson Downing, *AA Files* 55 (2007): 58–59.

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