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12.30.13 — [The End of Video History](#)

Topics: [Andrea Loefke](#), [Experimental Television Center](#), [LoVid](#), [Smack Mellon](#)

Cleaning out the closets at last for the old year? You have nothing on the [Experimental Television Center](#) and LoVid. Think more than forty years of television sets in a small room.

When ETC celebrated its first twenty-five years, in 1996, it was celebrating television as art for even longer. [New media](#), the survey insisted, was no longer new, and it was not just a digital alternative to film. No, a picture tube or TV set begins life as an object apart, before it becomes video. And it becomes video not just through technology, but through installation, performance, and sculpture. The celebration included a letter from a student to [Nam June Paik](#) himself. It promised not just a long history behind it, but a long future ahead.

Seventeen years later, a big chunk of that future is gone, and [LoVid](#) would like to remember what has been lost. The artist team would also like to strew its memories all over the floor and to project them on the walls. Their latest project emerged from ETC, where LoVid (in real life Tali Hinkis and Kyle Lapidus) held the last of its residencies. In 2011, ETC closed that program and its grant program, to concentrate on its archives. Born at SUNY-Binghamton, the Center still lies not too far west of campus, in Oswego, New York, but now even more outside the mainstream. LoVid, though, is not so much preserving video's history as trashing it, in the interest of putting on a show.



Roots No Shoots sounds like an elegy for something no longer living. Yet it boasts of the impact of technology in a rapidly changing present. LoVid fills a room at [Smack Mellon](#), through January 5, with every conceivable variant on a television—from early cathode ray tubes to last year's sale item for Black Friday. One can imagine them tossed aside for an upgrade. The pulsing video on the monitors and walls seems incomplete without an audience carrying smart phones and ready to rock out. A statement calls the opening an eVernissage.

You may associate residencies with emerging artists, but LoVid has its own history. It appeared in "[Produced at Eyebeam](#)" in 2005 and in the [New York Electronic Arts Fair](#) in 2011. Each time, old and new media collided with the shiny wrapping to regift them. Even more this time, one could dismiss the work as yet another oversized and [trashy installation](#). The TV sets look randomly distributed or just plain thrown away, now and again stacked vertically to rub in the excess. The set-up alludes to technical obsolescence without quite grappling with the new face of [industrial waste](#).

Still, the display of junk has a point. As for [Peter Fischli and David Weiss](#) in *The Way Things Go*, the flickering parts are deliberately quaint, and they sustain their variety the longer one looks. The sensory overload also continues into the air. The flashing lights and repeated patterns have an accompanying soundtrack, thanks to what the artists call their handmade synthesizer—and here, too, presence competes with nostalgia. The light show belongs at least in part to the psychedelic age, and the pulsating sounds approach syncopation. A young audience seems to enjoy it anyway, but what would an experimental television center so much as look like in this streaming age?

Roots No Shoots no doubt refers to ETC, but it could also apply to Andrea Loeffke in the front room. Her *Homecoming* makes use of trees, milk cartons, a ladder, and much else, on a large tilted platform shaped like a boat. One can picture an epic voyage a thousand years before global warming—and with an uncertain homecoming by the waterfront in Brooklyn. Still, Loeffke does not provide much help, and I would just as soon dance to the end of video history. LoVid leaves real issues unresolved or just plain unstated, but then

ETC's 1997 celebration was bound to skirt over specifics as well. Something really is dying, whether an institution or last year's hot toy for grownups, but why worry when you can pick up the pieces?

***Note:** I have appended this as a belated and, I hope, fitting postscript to a 1997 review of [ETC's exhibition](#) then. (And yes, darn it, I'm boasting of writing in support of that back then.) As an "early adopter" of online criticism, what have I learned about success and failure in new media? Suppose we set that question aside and call this [my latest upload](#).*

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