

# The New Artist-Run TV Channel You Need to Watch

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Artsy Editorial

By Alison Hugill

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A dark purple curtain is pulled back to reveal a spinning, jagged planetary object as droning theme music fades into lively Spanish guitar. This is the opening sequence of the new, online television network CONGLOMERATE's [first block of programming](#), which mixes references from Latin American telenovelas, unfettered public access television of the 1980s and '90s, Jerry Lewis telethons, woodworking and antique shows, and contemporary video art. The *gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art) was conceived and realized by Berlin-based artists and filmmakers [Sol Calero](#), Ethan Hayes-Chute, Derek Howard, [Christopher Kline](#), and Dafna Maimon as a roving network for video and performance art, generated by the core team and their invited collaborators.

The entire 30-minute block—launched on May 11th—proves to be a feat of comedic genius, with radically different artistic approaches melding gracefully into one holistic product. It begins with a telenovela, *Desde el Jardín*, written by Calero and Maimon. [Calero's distinctive aesthetic dominates the set design](#), with brightly colored tropical interiors and costumes setting the tone for a narrative unfolding almost entirely by way of dramatic looks and overt sexual innuendo. Adhering to the essential tropes of soap operas worldwide, the domestic workers (the eyes and ears of the household) dust haphazardly around the house of femme fatale Jennette, acting as speechless signifiers of the family's wealth and influence. Scenes from *Desde el Jardín*—the set of which featured in Calero's April exhibition in at David Dale Gallery for Glasgow International—recur throughout the block, punctuated by desire, death, and suspenseful to-be-continueds.

The impetus behind CONGLOMERATE's project was to take the exclusive visibility of and interaction with artworks out of the gallery setting, and to offer a platform for artists to present new content in an uninterrupted and accessible format. Calero and Kline, owners of the Berlin project space Kinderhook and Caracas—which is presently headquarters of the TV network—were looking for ways to expand the reach of their artist community beyond the purview of regimented gallery openings and subsequent documentation. They invited trusted friends and creatives Hayes-Chute, Howard, and Maimon to realize the enterprise.

Like the name of the channel itself, commercial segments between programs submit advertising jargon to a biting mockery; they use and abuse the rhetoric of neoliberal tech start-ups. After the unexpected success of a Kickstarter campaign last year, the Berlin-based artist [Constant Dullaart](#) launched DullTech, the company featured in his ad spot. The product, a USB-friendly media player for galleries, armed like a Trojan horse with Dullaart's own work, is described as “awkward consumer electronics made in South China, under pressure to deliver on time.” In the commercial, a 3D model of a DullTech-branded airplane is visualized from different angles, flying through the sky, as a bubbly American voice reassures us that this is merely art masquerading as business. Each spot concludes with the deceptively upbeat tagline: “Always a Dull Moment.”

The first block of programming also features segments by [Keren Cytter](#), [Jeremy Shaw](#), and [Christine Hill](#). “We asked for some form of exclusivity in the sense that what they submitted hadn't been online before in the same format,” Maimon tells me. “Jeremy Shaw sent us parts of a well-known project that he wasn't able to use in the final cut. Keren Cytter sent us behind-the-scenes material. A lot of her work is in private space; this one is shot in her apartment and you can hear her directing, so it's quite a beautiful way to enter her practice. Christine Hill is not a video artist so, in her case, she collaborated with Ethan Hayes-Chute to make the video for her ongoing project *Volksboutique*.”

One of the more absurd segments is the *Telethon*, in which unsubstantiated pleas for money become more and more abstract and uncanny. “It represents a hideous reality that underlies everything,” Maimon explains. “The

*Telethon* is a machine just asking for money but you don't know what it's for. It's like a Trumpian nightmare." The *Telethon* segment was co-created by the core team and is representative of the communal sense of humor and moxie that has motivated the whole project.

"We built the set together and we all put in our references, but nobody knew what it would be until it was up," Maimon notes. "Our first impression was that none of us would have done something like it on our own, but we were really happy with it precisely because it was so extreme. We have a lot of trust because we have such different strengths."

While CONGLOMERATE relies heavily on this community of artists and filmmakers, it aims to expand this network for future blocks. Beyond the six scheduled productions with soon-to-be-announced invited artists, the team is also planning to welcome guest art spaces to curate their own blocks. The second block, set to come out in a couple of months, will feature Christopher Kline's *The O.K. Show* and a new work by filmmaker Derek Howard, as well as repeat episodes of future cult classics *Behind the Beast*, *The New Domestic Woodshop*, and *Desde el Jardín*.

—Alison Hugill