

# The New York Times

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1978

## At the Kitchen: Sherman

**S**TUART SHERMAN'S Tenth Spectacle, presented by the performance artists at the Kitchen on Wednesday night, consisted of portraits of various cities.

For Istanbul, Mr. Sherman produced a loaf of bread with a candle in it, a black bag and a cassette recorder.

While the recorder played a soundtrack that sounded like market day in the Souks, he lighted the candle, whipped the knife through the flame, sliced the bread and turned the black bag upside down; some small white boxes tumbled out. Harper, Kan., was a pair of windup false teeth chattering away at corn on the cob against a tape of inane party conversation. And so on.

Props littered the performing space — a telephone, a rose, a roller skate, a straw boater hat, a raincoat, an umbrella, a newspaper and long strings of neckties that Mr. Sherman transformed into a beggar's rags for his portrait of Cairo.

But when Mr. Sherman was amusing, as he frequently was, and when there was a real flash of recognition, which was less often, it was because of his skill as a performer. He was energetic, deliberate, obsessive, and wonderfully deadpanned. Certain influences, ranging from Chaplin and Keaton to certain contemporary composers and environmental artists, were evident, but whatever Mr. Sherman was doing, it was something of his own. Some short films that featured Mr. Sherman doing similar routines but using the medium's particular properties to lend his work an additional dimension concluded the program.

Work like Mr. Sherman's raises some interesting questions for critics. Who should review it? Drama critics? Art critics? Dance critics? Or, because similar work has often been associated with the musical avant-garde, at least since the Fluxus movement of the early 1960's, should music critics review it? It seems to this music reviewer that such work, if it continues to find adherents, is going to necessitate a less specialized kind of criticism, and with it a less parochial set of artistic values.

ROBERT PALMER

PERFORMING ARTSERVICES, INC.

463 WEST STREET • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10014

PHONE (212) 989-4953