

# THE KITCHEN

VIDEO

MUSIC

DANCE

PERFORMANCE

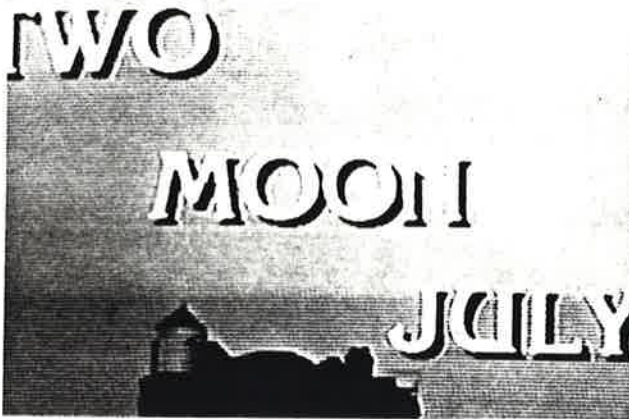
FILM

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Reservations: 255-5793

A Video  
Presentation  
of Twenty-five  
Contemporary  
Artists

by James Dillon



NIT & WIT

APRIL 27

**T**wo Moon July is a sixty minute special for television directed by Tom Bowes and produced for The Kitchen in New York by Carlota Schoolman. The title is derived from the relatively rare event which occurs when two full moons appear in one calendar month. Unconventionally paced, *Two Moon July* is an engrossing collage of sixty second shots which reflects the interdisciplinary mix of artists working at The Kitchen during its fifteen year history. The special presents the work of twenty-five contemporary artists in performance, music, dance, media, and visual arts. Funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting with additional support provided by the New York State Council on the Arts, *Two Moon July* will be broadcast nationwide on prime time PBS this season.

Expertly shot and edited, for the most part, *Two Moon July* highlights a rich and diverse history of performances by such artists as Laurie Anderson, David Byrne, Molissa Fenley, Philip Glass, and Bill T. Jones. The special has elegance of structure and shape which arises from Bowes's keen sense of line, clear perception of movement, and sharp awareness of proportion. A smooth succession of images emerges and merges with a naturally flowing line of other images, thrusting forward to anticipate material which appears in later shots. In using sequential shots of dancer Fenley, viewed warming up behind the horizontal and vertical lines of a large studio window, and dancer Jones, viewed warming up in the same space, seen from a greater camera distance, Bowes imposes natural continuity on his material. Continuity as well as contrast is imposed by his juxtapositioning shots of Fenley's smooth, legato movements with Jones's percussive, punctuated movements. The interior and exterior lines of the window, appearing in several shots, connect seemingly unrelated, disparate material. Shot at night against the interior side of the same studio window, a view of Glass playing the lyric, legato phrases of his early music appears near the end of the special, resolving conflicting imagery, ending the work on a quiet upbeat.

Scenes of light technicians setting up for the shots, sound engineers checking audio levels, and floor managers pacing frame performance material and impose structural continuity, but the format of going from technician to artist and from artist to technician, the show-within-a-show approach, is strikingly unoriginal. Why does a new art form require artificial structure? Is all structure artificial? David Byrne's hackneyed material and style of presentation also lacks originality and interest. Several dynamic collaborations are dissolved in this work. Fenley claims her work with Anthony Davis was a commission, not a collaboration, but Davis, not part of The Kitchen's history, and his music are an integral part of her work, *Hemispheres*. The camera views Fenley performing excerpts from *Hemispheres* by the side of a grand piano, but Davis, who may or may not be symbolized by the gleaming instrument, is conspicuously absent. Do we still believe in Laurie Anderson? Actually, she appears quite natural performing, *Oh, Superman*, with neon, glow-in-the-dark lips and a vocoder in her mouth.

Use of special effects by video artists Dara Birnbaum, Kit Fitzgerald, and John Sanborne is mercifully, and intentionally, limited in the special, but the bits of video play which do appear shatter the cohesive flow of the work and shatter the viewer's aesthetic emotions. Yes, making visual art installations interesting in the context of video is a difficult task; Bowes did not succeed in his attempt to incorporate the work of Jonathan Borofsky, Brian Eno, Robert Longo, or Cindy Sherman into the work.

The effect of *Two Moon July* is impressive and the end result is pleasing. Reflecting Ken Bowes's familiarity with the artists' work, the special is a piece in which each constituent element contributes to a unique whole. The piece is not a *complete* whole since many artists associated with The Kitchen's history are not represented. This work for television is indeed a special in which creative energy and artistic collaboration—specialities of this kitchen—are the subjects of an elegant retrospective. □