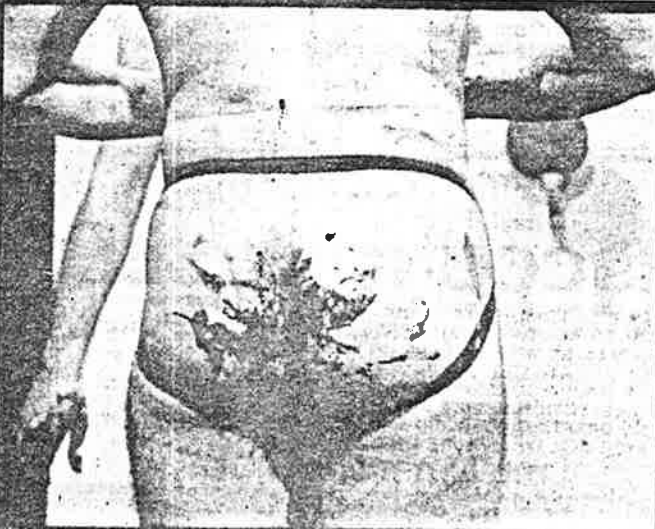


PERFORMANCE

THE KITCHEN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SYLVIA PLACHY



With their mock colostomies, fake food fights, and explosive masturbation finale, the Kippers depend on a potential for provocation beyond play-acting.

The Kippers: Breakfast of Perverts

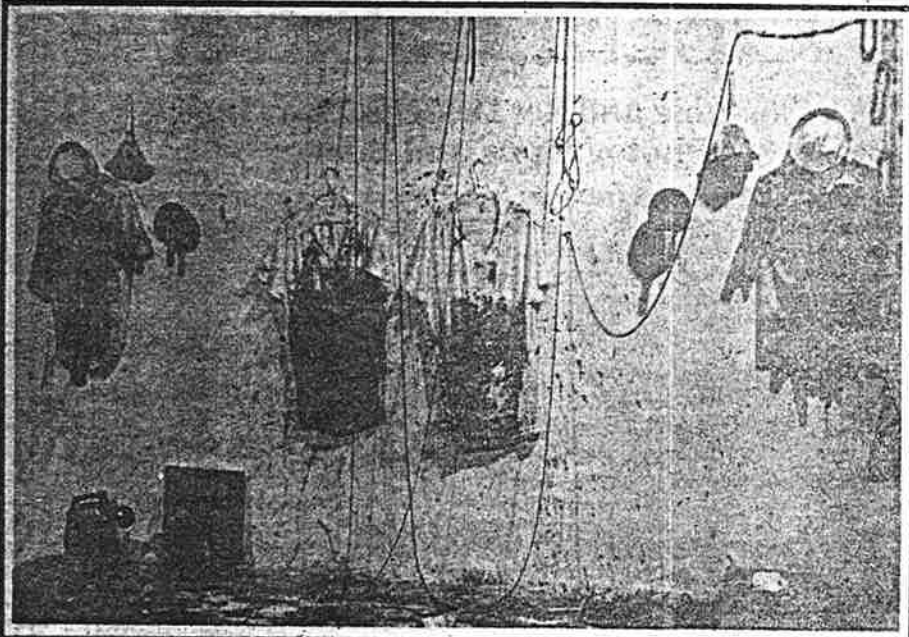
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PERFORMANCE



The Kipper Kids' detritus at the Kitchen

THE CISTERN OF THE REPRESSED

Noel Carroll

Silly Ceremonies
 The Kitchen (Nov. 8-10)

Remember King Ubu? Well, imagine two of him. Now picture them in an Otto Muehl performance rolling around in paint, powder and eggs. You have just discovered the Kipper Kids.

Two brutes lumber on stage. Their putty noses are priapic, commedia dell'arte masks. They wear black jock straps and T-shirts under which there are balloons. Their torsos seem outsized and swollen — beefy but bumpy barrel chests. They are gross — deliberately gross — in every sense of the word. Their comedy is of the body, celebrating its fleshiness, its thickness and fat, its smells, its grunts, groans

and farts, and the pleasures of viscid liquids smeared across the skin.

The Kipper Kids are specialists in heroic infantilism — regression in the name of liberation. Whenever they begin a conventional act, like singing "Roamin' in the Gloamin'," the body intrudes. The words become flesh, gnarled in the nasal passages and then sputtering into Bronx cheers.

This is humor of the most primordial and perhaps most basic sort, concerned with taboos and their violation. In all cases, it involves the body bodying forth. The Kipper Kids pick their noses, sniff each other's assholes, goose with abandon, sneak feels and masturbate. They have a violent streak, threatening each other with broken bottles. They portray human life in terms of untamed aggression and physicality — in terms of the animal in man, and man as animal. They are giant infants rollicking in ordure, asking us to remember the days when we were little monsters/animals/beasts fascinated with our feces.

The highpoint of their show is a twisted parody of *West Side Story*. Drinking water from old Thunderbird bottles, the Kipper Kids whistle "Tonight," pausing often in order to belch. They stage a mock rumble, breaking their wine bottles, jabbing at each other and bursting the balloons underneath their T-shirts which deliquesce into paints of garish colors. These blotches are rubbed lovingly into great messes. Next, in honor of "Maria," they chant a hymn to diarrhea, and squeeze brown paint out of a bladder that dangles above each of their asses. The fluid runs down their nates and stains their buttocks like the impress of a pair of diapers. Of course, throughout the rest of the performance, they find ample opportunity to moon "inadvertently" at the audience with their befouled tushies as they bend over to rearrange their props.

I have been told that some "knowledgeable" people found *Silly Ceremonies* offensive. This is hard to

believe since, for quite some time now, what it means to be civilized, truly civilized, includes a taste for regression. We have learned to savor our discontents in socially acceptable forms so enshrined that only fundamentalist preachers and Moonies can feign outrage at something like *Silly Ceremonies*.

At the same time, the Kipper Kids often become tedious. As we realized (somewhere around the 10th grade), forbidden sounds, words and acts have limited comic force in and of themselves. If they are to rekindle mirth, they have to be integrated into structures — jokes or pranks, for example. But repeatedly, the Kipper Kids rely on the simple act of transgression without elaboration; a fart without art is no fun. When the Kipper Kids have a structure — like the balloon game at the end of the performance, or the intermittent comic byplay between the contemptuous, pointy nosed, straight man and his whelpish companion — they are entertaining. But most of the time they are burping in a void.

You might think that if I really appreciated wallowing in the id I wouldn't be sounding off about structure. I'd recognize that without structure, we are confronted with the fructifying "eternal present" of the bodily self at its most primitive. But it's one thing to get into primal contact on your own and another to watch others so engaged. The "eternal present," when it is someone else's experience, feels like an endless spectacle.

The Kipper Kids were the hit of Soho the week of their appearance. The Kitchen was bulging at the seams. I suspect that their popularity in some way corresponds to our neighborhood's infatuation with punk, another form that identifies self-expression as studied regression. Undoubtedly, *Silly Ceremonies* also belongs to the tradition of body art, though unlike more radical examples of that mode, there was no actual masturbation, mutilation or defecation in the performance. British restraint, I suppose.

Kevin Noble