

The Kitchen Center for Video and Music

SoHo Weekly News, March 2, 1977

Swords and Granola

Wendy Perron

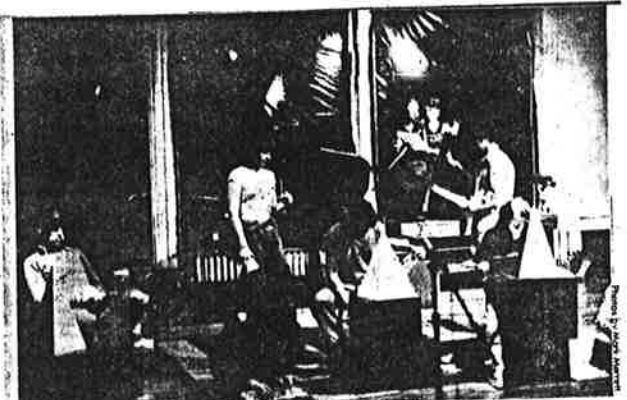
Stanley Oil and His Mother

Jill Kroesen

The Kitchen

Jill Kroesen's modest extravaganza, *Stanley Oil and His Mother*, is what I usually think of as conceptual art, in that the ideas of the piece have priority over the doing of it. What is said is more important than how it is said. You could tell someone over the phone what had happened. Well, she had people standing around being kings or waiters or beggars, and she'd ask them for tax money and they'd give her granola that she'd go sit in her mother's lap and play with the looter. You wouldn't have to describe the style. It's all there, the nuance, because there's a great irony. But that's not quite true. Because just as there is no such thing as silence, there is no such thing as no style. How you do something is revealing no matter how neutral you attempt to be. Kroesen seems to minimize style by being (and having her actors be) untheatrical, unincarnating, and uncommitted, but the rebelliousness of that choice can't be ignored. The extensive use of the symbolism (sword equals king granola equals money, Stanley Oil/Kroesen equals capitalism, the U.S.?) further accentuates the emptiness of the style. I say empty because the performance

has, flaunts, a kind of hollowness. No gesture or speech is attached to any inner urge or thought. The actors are uninvolved and unruffled, as though to say, I could just as well be paying taxes or not; I could just as well be a waiter as a beggar. No doubt that very arbitrariness is an intentional statement, perhaps of a political nature. Whether this is true or not, the message isn't always the message. Kroesen's own performance manner is unsettling. She is indifferent, insolent, and unglving. (It seems fitting that I'm listening to Lou Reed's "You're a slick little girl" as I write this.) Like Rainer Fassbinder in *Desert of the Holy Whores*, Kroesen plays the part of a violent and unfeeling dominator. In both cases I didn't know whether there was a difference between the roles and the person, but not at all. All she that difference is a difference between what you are and what you create. I did not see the entire *Stanley Oil*, but I'm glad I stayed long enough to hear Kroesen singing at the piano. The music she makes plunges her into a world of times and tones that forces her to be conscious of her materials. Here, at the piano, she is less detached, more at home, a singer who savors and is worth savoring. In the context of the sensuously prolonged notes, the clever but ghastly lyrics ("I'm only sixteen but can lead an army and I've further accentuates the emptiness of the 'ly mean'"), and her languid, throaty voice, the judiciousness is appropriate, real, and appealing.



Jill Kroesen's *Stanley Oil and His Mother*

How you do something is revealing no matter how neutral you attempt to be.



Kroesen in "mother's" lap Jill Kroesen

Haleakala, Inc. 59 Wooster Street, New York City 10012 212 • 925 • 3615