

# The Kitchen Center for Video and Music

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## LAWRENCE WEINER

Weiner's new video installation extends the range of settings he seems willing to let his enigmatic phrases get mixed up in. It has never been clear whether the phrases serve as explanations of forces of behavior at work among the characters who populate his video tapes, or if the directorial intent in his working with non-professional actors is to have the action illuminate something about the text beyond the clean tautological indifference that they give not unpleasantly off. The new piece seems to have reached a level of coexistence between phrase and action that previous tapes had not.

A table was built around a column in the gallery, much like picnic tables are built around trees in public parks. Three wood boxes and two cinderblocks surround the table. Colors were assigned to the elements of the set. Pink table, two purple boxes, one silver box, pink cinderblocks form a color scheme—all very arbitrary but somehow making a kind of directorial sense in the sense that the encoding of signification with color demarcation has the feeling of a pertinent idea. Three men and three women interact with the set and with each other. Two women mount the round pink table and begin to play at lovemaking in a slow, distracted, uncomfortably self-

conscious way while the three men and the other woman join in a seemingly senseless series of group and singular actions: passing the cinderblocks, restraining each other, drumming on the boxes, standing distractedly apart from each other in poses of alienation, placing the cinderblocks on the table between themselves and the two "lovers." It is a game, or a ritual. There is a complex sound track, the elements of which fade in and out: New Guinea tribal music, Weiner reciting the key phrase, Weiner asking his wife if she believes in water.

For the installation the table and the other props were left standing; the video tape was simultaneously projected on a screen and shown on a small monitor in another part of the room. The people in the tape look as though they are trying to remember something that they really don't want to remember at all. One tries to forget the inane, manipulatively gamelike quality of the piece even as one lives through the moment of giving attention to it. The strange dualities and reversals in the piece seem to lead to saying things like trying to forget can be a way of remembering—trying to remember or retain awareness that you were trying to forget you were born. The awkwardness of the tape as an analysis of how structure is implicit in any behavioral situation, the embodiment of *actions*, and the awkwardness in getting a grip on the experience of viewing it, results from the actors pretending to be doing things (behaving) in a state that existed before they knew how to do those things. But knowing how to go about doing this pretending (acting) comes out of knowing how to do what it is you're pretending not to know, i.e., relate to people in a way that makes sense. (The Kitchen, September 25-October 16)