

THE KITCHEN

VIDEO

MUSIC

DANCE

PERFORMANCE FILM

512 West 19th St. (Btwn 10th & 11th Aves) New York, NY 10011

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IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—
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THE performance artist Karen Finley has a bad-girl reputation for fluent profanity, matter-of-fact nudity, gleeful taboo-bashing, and solo food fights. So you approach her shows armed against inevitable indiscretions. The real surprise, though, is her onstage manner. You don't expect her to be so *sweet*. With long hair, a thrift-store minidress, and a Midwestern accent as broad as the plains, she reminds you of any downtown waitress. (In fact, until 1986, Finley was, among other things, a bartender at Danceteria.) In performance, she entices you with her femininity, and then—in case you forgot that femininity is a male ideal—she rebukes you with a face-slapping diatribe about, say, rape or incest that sounds like something Billy Graham and Public Enemy might have cooked up in a public-speaking class. "I was raised with the idea that there were no women with any power," she told us recently, "and that the only way I could fight traditional female roles was to take that traditional role—that is, feminine desirability—into my own hands. And I wish I didn't have to."

Finley's new solo performance, "We Keep Our Victims Ready" (which will run at the Kitchen from April 11 to April 21), is, she says, her most serious, political work yet. "I talk about *Roe v. Wade*, I talk about censorship, and I talk about women's rights," she said. "I basically deal with people being born into the victim class of our society. And I compare women to veal calves, and then I compare America to Nazi Germany. And then I cover my body with chocolate, and it looks like it's shit, and at the end I really talk about death, about the invisible." It won't be a drive in the country—more like a roller-coaster ride through a haunted house—but Finley's big-heartedness always peeps through. "I do believe in the best in people," she said with a laugh.

THE KITCHEN—April 11-14 at 8:30: Karen Finley in "We Keep Our Victims Ready." Through April 21. . . . April 16 at 8:30: Two videos. "The Gun Is Loaded," written by Lydia Lunch; and "Borders," written and narrated by Robert Anton Wilson. (512 W. 19th St. 255-5793.)