

THE KITCHEN

VIDEO

MUSIC

DANCE

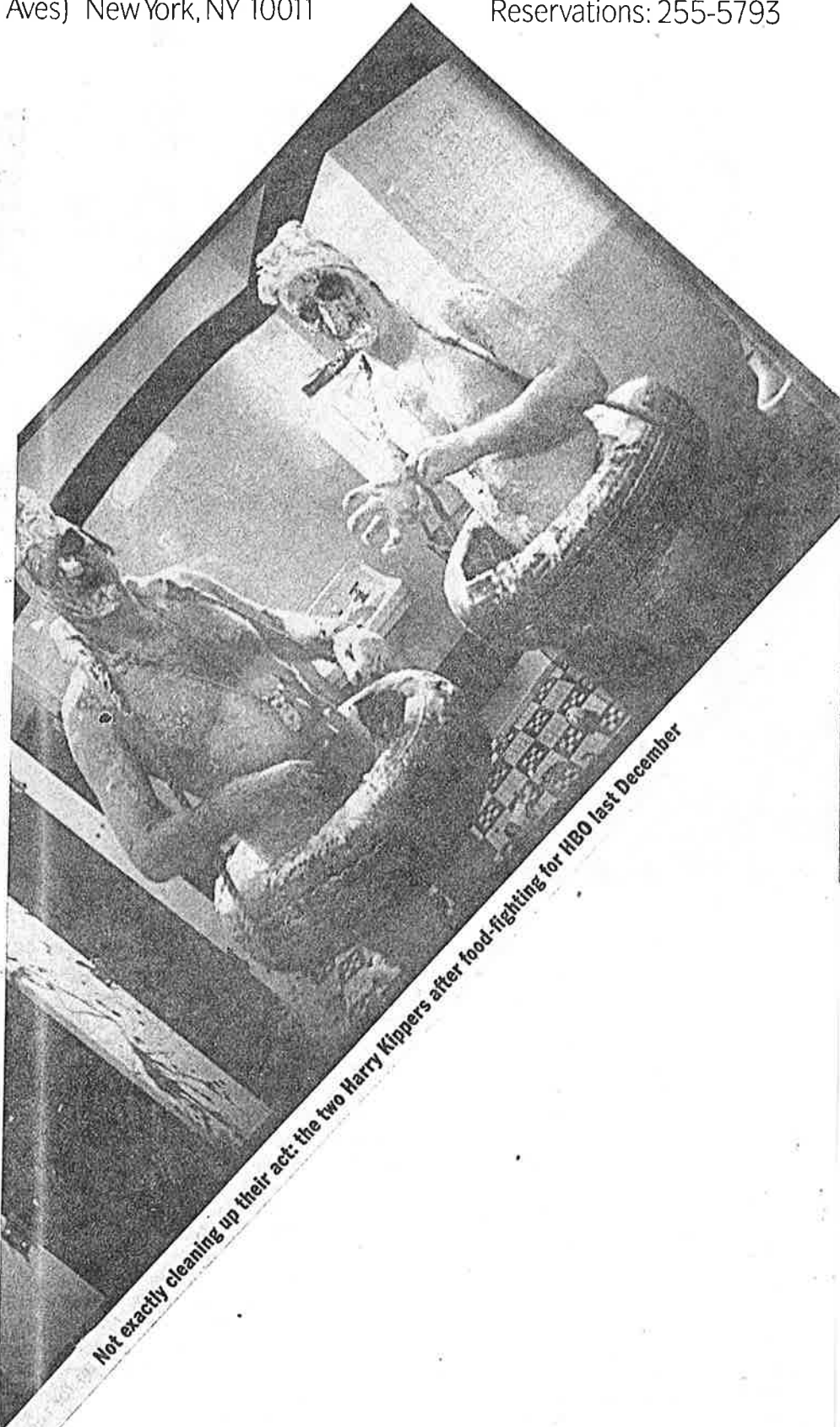
PERFORMANCE FILM

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

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Bless This Mess

*The
Kipper
Kids:
Clown
Princes
of
Performance
Art*



Not exactly cleaning up their act: the two Harry Kippers after food-fighting for HBO last December

WE KID, YOU NOT



DETAILS

MAY 1988

The Kipper Kids: Harry Kipper (left) and Harry Kipper

Martin von Haselberg (left) and Brian Routh

These are the Kipper Kids, Martin Von Haselberg and Brian Routh. But their real names are Harry Kipper and Harry Kipper. The Kipper Kids are performance artists who do crazy kid things with food and their bodies. "We call what we do 'ceremonies,'" Harry says. "We always do the identical thing to each other. It's like seeing a mirror image." Sometimes the food ends up in the audience, and Harry and Harry have spent time in litigations over the dry cleaning bills. Sometimes their bodies end up in the audience, and Harry and Harry have spent time in altercations over the seats.

Their first performance together was at Shea Stadium in Charlotte Moorman's Avant-Garde Festival in 1974. Their latest was this year—*Into the Box, Out of the Box* at the Kitchen in New York, and an appearance on the HBO special *Mondo Beyondo*. You saw them. Harry in a jockstrap and inner tube, Harry pouring cranberry sauce on Harry, Harry dumping a bag of flour on Harry, Harry spraying shaving cream on Harry's head, Harry lighting a firecracker in the shaving cream. "The reason we both use the name Harry," Harry says, "is that, when we were at drama school and fooling about with each other in various dialects and as these characters, we thought we should give our characters names. So we thought of Harry and Alf, but we could never remember who was who. In the end, we decided to both be Harry." "Kipper was something that totally came off the top of our head," Harry says. "No," Harry tells Harry, "you told me it was because the character reminded you of someone you went to school with who was called Kipper because he had a face like a fish."

Whatever.

For a few years between 1974 and 1988, the Kipper Kids quit Kid-

ding around. "We stopped performing," Harry says, "because it required us to be with each other all the time. We were drunk nearly all the time. We would drink a quart of whiskey on stage as part of the show in a matter of thirty minutes. And we lived the show—onstage, offstage. The distinction between the show and life was completely blurred. We would fuck everything in sight. We just sort of burned out." "I have scars," Harry says. "My hands are very badly burned. I'd say it was drug-related. We were on acid at the time. We performed on acid tons of times in the Seventies." "Yes," Harry says, "we've performed probably on every drug that was available in the Seventies." They're clean now. Or, as Harry puts it, "He doesn't drink at all, but I do, but right now I don't." Harry's been in AA for two years, in fact.

"We thought the only way we could do the Kipper Kids was that way, and we weren't interested in continuing to live that way." "Three or four years ago," Harry interrupts, "I was working in Gracie Mansion as a maintenance man. The other maintenance man I worked with was a coke dealer, and we'd freebase as soon as we got to work. I started to go downhill very very fast." "We now have discovered," Harry says, "that we're really interested in doing the Kipper Kids, but we're no longer under the delusion that we have to be drunk onstage and have to live that way and have to spend twenty-four hours a day with each other. The same stuff is there—the character, the rapport, timing, skill. Now we want to make a series of films—Kipper Kids shorts. We think the Kipper Kids would be fun in a western. Or as hitmen, or as cat burglars, as terrorists, as spies.... And the characters lend themselves to dolls."

Kipper Kids at K-Mart.

—Stephen Saban