

THE KITCHEN

VIDEO MUSIC DANCE

PERFORMANCE FILM

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

Reservations: 255-5793

Ordeals Of Change

BY DEBORAH JOWITT

FRED HOLLAND. *What I Like About Us...*
At the Kitchen, November 17 through 20.

Fred Holland's *What I Like About Us...* unfolds at a deliberate pace, and it deals with mysterious ceremonies. But unlike the two Eastern choreographers, Holland doesn't deal with archetypes. His rites are private and specific.

This theater piece is based on the tragic case of June and Jennifer Gibson, the autistic twins with the brilliant and dangerous private world, who ended up in Broadmoor, Britain's citadel for the criminally insane—separated from each other—after they set fire to a store.

The most compelling thing about Holland's piece is the performing of Holland and Robbie McCauley. The two—a man and woman of about the same size—are identically clad in school-uniform outfits: checked skirts and white blouses. They hang their heads and walk with tiny shuffling steps, always in unison. They're numb, moving as if they fear a large energetic motion might break them. Whether they challenge each other in a cryptic game with billiard balls or stand side by side and eat green candy, their faces barely change, but the small shifts from foot to foot, the sidelong glances of their glittering eyes create intimations of their vivid inner life.

The performing area is a macabre play-

the village
VOICE

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ground—wonderfully lit by Carol McDowell. There's music (by Lawrence "Butch" Morris) and intermittent video and film (by Cathy Weis). The place is full of furniture and other objects. The twins move from one odd game to another. They enter wheeling fantasy bikes—tall poles on a single wheel. They lie on a slanted Plexiglas bed. One is caught in the grip of a pair of blue arms stuck to a board. One drowns and stabs a doll; the other lays out a plaster arm and torso on a table. One makes the other lie under the table and, using the fake arm, anoints her face with silver spots. Together they work a remote-controlled toy car with an arm strapped to it, together they ignite one house of a village of small houses.

These and many other activities eerily limn the intimate yet antagonistic sisterhood of the Gibson twins and the bizarre dream world they inhabited. As a whole, though, *What I Like About Us...* seemed incomplete—a series of dark, tenuously connected events. I wondered what someone who hadn't read of the twins, or seen the recent television drama based on their case, would have made of it. Holland used very little of the amazing and highly articulate prose that poured out of the girls into diaries and poems. What he did use created such poignant juxtapositions—the cautious, silent, awkward children fancied themselves Amazons, heroines riding into battle, beautiful and brave—that I wished for more. ■