

The Kitchen [-An Electronic Image Lab] was originated by Woody and Steina Vasulka with much help from Andy Mannick and others including Andy Mann and Frank Gillette who had participated in *TV as a Creative Medium* at Howard's uptown gallery. With no organizational structure, Woody and Steina asked Howard to harbor The Kitchen as a project within EAI so that they could request support from the New York State Council on the Arts. The Kitchen held its first events in, I believe, April of 1971. I got involved in the late summer of 1972 when my roommate, Jim Burton, was asked to take over programming electronic music events that Rhys Chatham had been hosting on Monday nights. Jim knew Rhys as they were both composers. I knew Rhys because he had been setting up the sound equipment for LaMonte Young, Marian Zazeela and Pandit Pran Nath's Raga concerts at Paula Cooper Gallery, where I had been working since September of 1970. It was a wonderfully close-knit "family" of people sharing lots of energy.

During the fall of 1972, I continued to work for Paula Cooper, but I was also helping out with the music concerts at The Kitchen, which was then located in the Mercer Arts Center on the second floor of the Broadway Central Hotel a block or two north of Houston Street. I collected the one-dollar admissions in a used videotape box, added up the totals and turned the cash over to Howard. I also started laying out the monthly calendars that listed the concerts and screenings. Sometime about January of 1973, Woody and Steina announced they were leaving to teach in Buffalo and they turned the reins over to Dimitri Devyatkin and Shridar Bapat, two young guys who were absolutely devoted to The Kitchen. Howard, however, seemed to like the service of getting income reports and having timely announcements of events, so he asked Jim Burton and me to meet with him in his office where he offered us jobs of "director" (me) and "assistant director" (Jim). That spring, Lydia Silman, director of the NYSCA's film/television/video program alerted Howard to the availability of mid-year funds for special needs. (Budgets for funding at NYSCA and the National Endowment for the Arts were increasing at a fast clip during the early 1970s). Howard asked us to write up a list of things The Kitchen needed so he could see what he could get for us. He struck that uniquely "Howard" look: youthfully conspiratorial and paternal at the same time, with bushy eyebrows lofted over a thin, warm, quizzical grin.

Jim and I assembled a complete list: editing decks, monitors, tape decks, speakers, amplifiers, a piano, salary raises . . . the whole nine yards. The total: \$250,000. When we took it to Howard, we didn't get the "Howard" look, only a glum stare. He pared down the list and we did get some very appreciated mid-year money to replace worn out equipment and to pay the Vasulkas for personal equipment they had loaned to The Kitchen. The irony of this story is that four years later, when I left The Kitchen in 1978 to become director of The Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati, The Kitchen budget stood at \$250,000 and the equipment inventory and many of the components of that early "wish list" were in hand.

Back to The Kitchen at the Mercer Arts Center. In the spring of 1973, the landlord of the Center told Howard that the rent for the next year was going to increase. I think we were paying \$6,000 a year for the small (maybe 1500 square foot) space, but the landlord was going to jump that to \$10,000 or so. That was out of the question, so we would have to move. At the end of June (and the end of the lease) we pulled out most of the equipment and stored it at the 28 Greene Street loft where Jim Burton and I lived. I started looking for new space for The Kitchen. At one point I think I had just about every available piece of loft space in SoHo tied up in some kind of negotiation. Howard was not in favor of a big space. He preferred to consider a small space that would function mostly as an office and editing studio with a small room for screenings. Since early '73, The Kitchen programs had expanded to include performance events that often drew overflow audiences of 120. We needed larger space to continue that direction.

August 3, 1973, in the afternoon, I was taping broadcasts off the television in the Greene Street loft when I heard sirens screaming through the streets. Roger Grimsby broke in with a news flash reporting that the front wall of the Broadway Central Hotel had collapsed with several injuries and possible deaths. We had gotten out just in time. (Wouldn't I like to know where that piece of videotape is!)

In the fall, I reached an agreement with Jeff Byers, the landlord of 59 Wooster Street, to lease the 7,500 square-foot second floor for about \$10,000 a year. It was a glorious space, but the price was too much for Howard. At the same time, we were compiling grant application for EAI's next-year request to NYSCA. Howard and I had many conversations about the future relationship between The Kitchen and EAI. By that point, The Kitchen's budget had grown to nearly equal the rest of EAI's. We agreed, finally, that it was best to create a new organization for The Kitchen, independent of EAI. In order to be eligible to apply for NYSCA support, though, we had to incorporate as a non-profit, and we had only three months to do it. We met Peter Frank (the lawyer, not the writer) through Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. Peter helped us submit the incorporation papers. We received several rejections for names of the new organization. Some were already taken. Others, like "The Kitchen, Inc.," were not acceptable to whatever state board of review looks at this sort of thing. We finally submitted a list of 10 names, including the odd one that was accepted, Haleakala, Inc., the name of the mountain that forms the island of Maui, Hawaii, where my parents lived at the time. Curiously, Haleakala means "house of the sun" in Hawaiian, rather inappropriate since most of the activities of The Kitchen took place in near total darkness. By the spring of 1974, the company was established and able to receive its first charitable contributions. At first, the Board of Directors included only myself, Jim Burton and Peter Frank. It was augmented with a Board of Advisors, all later became regular board members, and some are still on The Kitchen's Board of Directors, including Caroline Stone, Philip Glass and Laurie Anderson. Paula Cooper, a member of the original Board of Advisors, served as Chairman for nearly 20 years.

Robert Stearns, May 2001