

Feb. 9, 1973

NS

Ms. Lydia Silman  
New York State Council on the Arts, Film-TV  
250 West 57 Street  
N.Y.C. 10019

Dear Ms. Silman;

This letter is to request additional emergency funding for THE KITCHEN and related programs.

Activity and scheduling of programs has dramatically increased as The Kitchen gained recognition as the center for the presentation of experimental works in video and the sonic arts. This success has brought problems of crisis proportions in two areas and severe strains in others.

I) The first crisis area is STAFF.

Shridhar Bapat has been managing The Kitchen as well as producing most of the video events presented there. This dual task has become too arduous for one person to handle, so we have been forced to divide the work between two persons. Bapat will continue his video production work, and we have provisionally appointed Robert Stearns as business manager and co-ordinator of programs. The success of the New Music program has generated great pressure for the use of the Kitchen's facilities on the part of experimental composers and performers, and one result of this otherwise welcome development has been that Rhys Chatham, the Director of this program has asked to be relieved of his administrative and producing duties in order to devote his time to his own work. We have agreed to his request, and have provisionally appointed James Burton to direct this program. Bapat is receiving a stipend for living expenses from the current allocation, but both Stearns and Burton will require allowances to help them meet their living expenses. Because of the time required to be devoted to The Kitchen, none of the staff has time for other paying jobs and they must depend largely on their income from the Kitchen in order to live.

The enclosed two clippings, one from yesterday's VILLAGE VOICE and the other from this morning's N.Y. TIMES are indicative of the variety of programs presented by The Kitchen as well as the attention which these are commanding.

- II) The second area of crisis is EQUIPMENT. As you are well aware, almost every program presented at The Kitchen is greatly dependent on The Kitchen's video and sonic capabilities. Despite the modest acquisition of equipment permitted by small allotments from NYSCA's assistance, much of the video equipment and almost all of the audio equipment at The Kitchen is borrowed from friends. This situation has now become embarrassing and awkward both for our friends the lenders and for ourselves.

The owners of the borrowed equipment are becoming uneasy if not resentful, as they cannot use their own equipment when it is on loan to the Kitchen, and are fearful as well that the various components will start to show wear and tear if our use continues indefinitely.

Using borrowed equipment is proving progressively more difficult for us as our use of it continues to grow. For example, in some programs the equipment must be transported from elsewhere in the Mercer Arts Center or from even greater distances. This involves much wasted time and effort. Often, if the desired equipment has to be used by its owners, programs have to be postponed with all the attendant scheduling difficulties.

This situation will become more acute if we are forced to change our location, as seems likely if our rent is raised substantially, for then the equipment located at the Mercer Arts Center's other facilities will not be available to us.

We feel that we should have at least minimal production equipment for both video and sonic presentations and combinations of the two, inasmuch as practically every program which we present requires this equipment. To bring our equipment up to this level, we need the following:

A TV camera with tivicon tube; a video special effects generator; a video distributing switching system; and for the sonic components, two stereo power amplifiers; a pre-amp; four speakers; a four channel tape deck; an audio generator for video translation; and a simul-sync audio recorder, as well as the necessary lights and accessories.

Our present owned equipment consists of four B & W and two color monitors; a used Sony 5000 and a Panasonic 3130 VTR; a video layer and an audio pre-amp, all purchased out of this years allocation and costing about \$3000.

The electronic equipment is the heart of the Kitchen. We will not be in a healthy situation until we are in a position to control our electronic facilities. We hope you will provide us with the funds to avert what appears to be an immanent catastrophe.

III) In addition to the VideoTape Festival, which was so successful last year, we would like to mount a "Computer Arts Festival" this Spring under the direction of Dimitri Devyatkin. This would entail some costs such as mailing invitations, publicity, etc, and would require some stipend for the organizer, who will have to devote about three months of his time to this project. Like the rest of the staff, Devyatkin has spent so much of his time on Kitchen affairs (he has been organizing and presenting the Wednesday evening Open Video Tape programs, even though no funding for these was provided) that his outside earning capacity has been minimal, and despite his important contribution to the Kitchen's success, his financial situation is desperate.

IV) One of the areas in which we started activity but have not been able to follow through effectively is in encouraging the work of several artists using video techniques and electronic processing of sound to present traditional forms such as opera, (Michael Tschudin, The Midnight Opera Company); theatre (Philip Perlman, The Actors' Video Workshop); and Rhys Chatham and James Burton (Contemporary Music). The forms into which these experiments have evolved is much more video and sonic than theatre or music. Each, despite the nominal or complete lack of funding, have presented four or five notable programs at the Kitchen already this year, and we trust that they may be afforded the opportunity of carrying on their experimental work by means of further supplemental funding.

V) One of our problems is to make our programs known in advance of their presentation.

The Kitchen publishes at the beginning of each month a calender of that month's events. These are mailed to critics and to special friends of the Kitchen. The demand "to be put on the mailing list" is growing incessantly, and is costly and time consuming to comply with. It is risking a friend of the Kitchen to refuse his demand, and difficult to ask him for a fee to offset our cost of adding his name to the list.

Instead, we should like to take out a weekly ad in the Village Voice in which we would list the weeks' events. This would have a number of advantages, including the following:

Our practice has been to split the "donations" at the gate with the artist on a 50-50 basis. We have used our share to producing and mailing the monthly calender and to help offset the costs of mounting the production. The artist has used his share to help pay his expenses.

This has worked well except for one fact---the "take" has not been large enough to satisfy our needs. I might add that sometimes some of our share of the take is given to Devatkin or some other needy worker who has performed a service for the Kitchen. The "take" has been running around \$30-50, and is of course dependent to a large extent on the size of the audience.

We believe such ads would work to increase the size of the audience and thus increase the take.

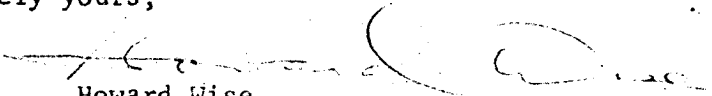
While the artist whose work is performed is charged no fee for the use of the Kitchen's facilities, his sole recompense is his share of the take. His situation would be greatly improved if we could increase the take and therefor his share of same.

We also feel that the artist's ego would be benefitted by seeing his name in print in the Voice, and of course it goes without saying that he would derive great satisfaction and benefit from a larger audience.

One might ask, "which comes first, the chicken or the egg?" i.e. the big gate or the publicity. It would not cost much to find out, and if successful it would yield big dividends. We would like to try it out.

All those connected with the Kitchen are most grateful to The New York State Council on the Arts for its continued interest and support through Electronic Arts intermix, and on their behalf I wish to thank the Council and commend this request for its consideration.

Sincerely yours,

  
Howard Wise  
President