

Actors or artists? ETAGE fare lets you decide

Five E-Z Pieces. An evening of performance art by Tom Dan, Lynn Denton, Tom Hatten, Jim Kugler, Pat Sprott and Ann Chu. ETAGE, 253 N. 3d st., 8.30 P.M., May 29 to 31.

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"Five E-Z Pieces" is back. By now, no one, at least no one who follows performance art, should confuse it with the Jack Nicholson movie. It is not a movie. Nor for that matter is it a play. If it utilizes both media, that's because "Five E-Z Pieces" is all over the ballpark.

Actually, it's all over ETAGE, the theater cum gallery cum alternative performance space that officially shuts its doors next month. "Five E-Z Pieces," which is essentially what it says it is — five separate sketches — has played ETAGE for three years in a row. It is an evening of the ethereal, one that largely exists in the imagination of its audience.

As if to illustrate that, Tom Dan's piece, the

first of the evening, takes place in the dark. A figure calls the name "Skip" and lights a match as if in search. He runs through a matchbook and crawls through the theater, calling for "Skip."

"Bad News" is the second sketch and more closely resembles live theater. Lynn Denton of NEXUS and R.C. Younger play a husband and wife. However, everything is reversed, literally turned inside out. He is pregnant and she is the breadwinner. The "Bad News" is that he neglected to take the pill.

Artist Tom Hatten is third. Sitting in the middle of the stage bathed in a circle of light, he calls as if to an offstage presence and tensely reads from a notebook. The words do not matter. "The entire function of the X," he says, "is to become one with infinity."

"Till You" is a poor man's version of Cinemascope. Artist Jim Kugler uses two 8mm projectors to detail the decline and fall of a love affair. It progresses through a series of stages defined as Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. In the film

on the right, a man and woman court and eventually part. The film on the left shows a series of rooftops as seen through the passage of time. By winter, they are covered with snow.

"Icur Hi Knee," the last and possibly most affected piece, is from Pat Sprott and Ann Chu, two recent graduates of the Philadelphia College of Art. A sheet is hung from the ceiling on which a film of a solitary figure is shown. Behind the sheet, another solitary figure merges with the one on screen. There is more but it is largely pointless.

"Five E-Z Pieces" is a strange evening. It is worth seeing. Perhaps attending is a better word. It is not theater, nor are the performers actors. They are artists. Hatten, for example, is a painter. There is no stage, only a space.

These are artists engaged in a form of guerilla warfare against traditional art. They are telling us that art is far more than canvas. It does not occupy a physical space. Rather it occupies our mind.

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