

Dallas Arts Revue

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arthereately #20
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LINKS: [Mitch Dobrowner's storm shots](#) on the Afterimage site are amazing.

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Urban Theater: New York Art in the 1980s
at the Fort Worth Modern through Jan 4.



window boy

Certainly the happiest kid I saw that evening of wandering art spaces till all of a sudden I looked at my list and I'd done every one but Ro2 downtown, where I didn't want to pay to park or walk blocks, and I'd just done a decent job on a long piece of [a show there](#), so I didn't need to write about them till again a little while. The happy kid and I traded smiles is about all, but enough. I felt communicated with on my journey.

Kinda refreshing not even bothering with where all this stuff was and will be till whenever, by whom or titles, so much it's hard to imagine me doing the dada data duty of holding a calendar together again, but I do wish somebody would list every show by every artist with as many pictures as possible, so I could pick and choose among more art visit possibilities again.

PerformanceSW's Inside)(Outside Live Performance Showcase:
Is it *is* or is it *not* Performance Art?

Oil + Cotton

H. Schenck and Esther Manske *60/40: Conversations*



H. Schenck and Esther Manske *60/40: Conversations*

The audience was captivated by this informal and impromptu four-hand concert that defied most of my expectations of Performance Art, even if it was most certainly performance and the artform was familiar — somewhere among Classical, Jazz and noodling. Manske told me afterwards she had particularly wanted to *not* perform any specific piece, so together they created an improvised soundtrack as the showcase's first overt performance.

And though I quite enjoyed it, I'm not at all convinced it was Performance Art. It let my mind wander, not consider, or make connections. And my mind *needs* wandering, but it *craves* the strangeness of Performance Art, and good examples are hard to come by.

And yeah, I know, Inside Outside only *calls* their content "live performance" in big print. But the small print in at least one of the programs reminds us that "PeformanceSW is a project in support of the proliferation of performance art outside of the mainstream American discourse." Which is where performance art usually resides.

The events in this story are in chronological order.

Michael Anthony Garcia *If At First*



Michael Anthony Garcia wait for informal participant performers

But there was more subtle performance art already in progress, and at first I had no idea what it was, although I could plainly see this guy talking with people, explaining and handing them bits of tape and pens and stuff. Garcia's costume — whose relevance to his performance was like performance art often is, questionable at best. But he obviously was up to something abstract. And what Garcia helped others create was an esoteric, astute and extended piece that grew by turns while occupying nearly no time or space, yet still set off notions and motions that adhered fiercely to the the more time-honored and important traditions of performance art.

What he did, was inveigle others to, relying on their first impressions, describe someone who had volunteered to be judged, in one or just a few words. Then they attached those impressions via colored tape to whom elicited the response. Once I was in on the trick, I easily recognized its interactions among audiences even across large spaces, as the show progressed and Garcia's game played on.



This Way!

The volunteer targets wore a red on white, "Hello. My name is" peel-off, stick-on with one capital letter scribbled in bold black Marks-A-Lot. The impression makers looked carefully, found a volunteer, watched awhile, then wrote their initial impressions. Garcia provided materials, concept and encouragement but watched from afar, often while selling more people on the plan. If he handed-out labels alphabetically, there were at least fifteen willing targets. Probably more.

So, Garcia's *If At First* was **Inside Outside**'s first serious and real Performance Art. It preceded the pianists, and it continued through more — maybe all — of the scheduled performances. I last saw him in costume out under the bright lights of the marquee at the Texas Theater, upstairs from where the last scheduled event was. Participants trended slightly more colorful, and they interacted. And their slow progression of peripheral performance was decidedly *art*, because it was intentional, conceptual, experimental and their results were uncertain.

Several performances later, some targets were still wearing their impressions. Others were stuck on walls and several were on a

banner. You had to look to see its tracks, so it was probably more interesting and fun to participate than to see or just know about.



Little Boys Dancing

Meanwhile, also inside Oil & Cotton's previously pleasantly cool performance room, its two, large, more-than-adequate AC sources were carefully and securely closed off, and the front door opened to the glowering humidly, so a slow hot, sticky, swelter ensued inside.

It took awhile to get going, but two of the youngest members of the audience started physically interacting with the piano by dancing and singing more or less along, while most adults head-bobbed, chair-danced or just watched. These children were the first to break from being passive listeners to become active, albeit unofficial, participants in the extemporized performance.



no-no to dancing and making noise

And like children everywhere, once they got going doing that, they got carried away with the music and themselves and made it their own — and they were twice stopped by this finger-shaking mother.

I thought theirs was a valuable contribution to the performance, laughter, squeals, dancing, singing and all, so I asked PerformanceSW honcho Ali Starr for her take, and she thought their performance was fun and fine, so I relayed that information to the mother, who told the the kids it was okay to dance, but they should not be loud.



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Adults Caught Up in the Changes

But of course they did and were, and all that energy compounded into its own lopsided succession of spreading spontaneity. Not long later, a guy in a pink shirt with a bold **G** on his my-name-is label asked the mom to dance, and when they did, the crowd rewarded them with enough smiles and charmed joy to cool everybody off for awhile.

After changing tunes, tones, timbres, texture, rhythm and melodies for nearly 45 minutes, the pianists wound down, phased into a subtle mutual ending, stood up, didn't exactly bow but paused briefly leaning toward the door and walked out to gentle general applause. *Performance* enough, but art? Not so much.

Caitlin Scott ***EFEMURAL***



Sharing Sounds - with remnants of Michael Anthony Garcia's *If At First* taped to the red shirt:
sweet, boyish, bohemian on the yellow and *enthusiastic* and *cute* on green

Ryan Hawk *untitled*