



# JRR Talking

Retired Minister, Friend Of Reason, Lover Of Life

HOME BLOG PODCAST VIDEOS CONTACT ME Q

## Art And Absurdity: Reflections On Houston’s Performance Art Festival 2017



As a fan of the arts and humanities, I’ve always had a special place in my heart for the concept of the Absurd. I agree with Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein, that our minds are confronted with it daily in our search to make sense of the world. I also love the connections and passions that good art elicits. When the two collide, some amazing work can result, such as Surrealist artists Magritte, Ernst, and Carrington. However, the combination is not always fruitful, and at times leaves me questioning, “Is that really Art?” The balance needs to be fraught with elegance and beauty to move me. Houston’s Performance Art Festival has managed to find that sweet spot.

Arriving at the first venue Thursday night, viewers were treated to what seemed like a variety show from another dimension. Michael Anthony Garcia started off the night with a performance that is somewhat difficult to capture with words, but included a song he

wrote himself, a funnel leading to his underwear, and a lot of bright liquids. The work was not purely comedic, yet Garcia managed to arouse laughter out of the audience.

I will not curate all of the performances, but wish to highlight that the best parts of the night were not just performances, but the conversations with local artists, fans, and thinkers. Art crowds are known for being a tad poncey and pretentious. This was NOT the case here. Everyone here was approachable, and the very last act even included the audience in a thrash jam session that saw drums, recorders, and a disgusting amount of glitter/confetti eggs spread around the venue. I've heard it said that glitter is the herpes of theater, and now I know why.



(The lights were killed at the end of a piece by Mi + Me)

Yet the night was not merely about shock and awe. These folks are artists, and their work is art. Perhaps one of the stranger acts, was where a couple enter the stage wearing next to nothing but robes. The sounds of crickets in real time being looped over more crickets that had been slowed down, blasted over the speakers and was haunting and beautiful. The couple consisted of a tall thin man, and a shorter stout woman, who then disrobed and began to hold each other in varying fashions throughout the piece.

Although not the only nude piece for the evening, it was the one that made me think the most. The piece was in no way sexual or obscene, yet the moment aroused a great variety of responses from the crowd.

The male partner, who introduced himself as Raindawg Tao, began to discuss the piece



(Raindawg and Cat Scott during a piece that lasted well over 5 minutes and captured the attention and silence of the room)

to me. I told him that while the piece was just a tad shocking, it did not seem to be obscene or sexual. Rather, I thought the work was a commentary on intimacy. What followed was a smile and a 7 minute discussion on the piece. "We want to change how men and women are seen in different settings. Beyond taboos, nudity is most often used to exploit women. The female body is so often hyper-sexualized when it meets certain standards, yet a deviation from that body type is often met with disgust. The male form is also so masculinized that men are often seen as weak when expressing love and vulnerability and this is just as troubling...To take the human body and erotics elements, and drain it of the prurient, is the purpose of the piece, you are right to say the theme concerns intimacy!" We exchanged info, and I hope to include him in later works of mine.

While there are photos from folks with real cameras, the ones taken by me are special to me. The artists agreed to let me post these, and were a delight to talk to. As mentioned earlier, the conversations were my favorite part, and I look forward to having more this weekend.

The last point is this, that art like this isn't just weird for the sake of being weird. Much of the works were certainly strange, but they were pregnant with meaning and



forethought. This is a craft like any other, and I'm excited to see more.

Festivals like this make me proud of Houston. There is something for everyone in this city, and to be welcomed and befriended by artists-who are not always considered the friendly type-is among my favorite of the contradictions this city exemplifies.

Houston will always disrupt expectations, and it will always have my love for that. You can catch the rest of the festival this weekend and get further information at [www.experimentalaction.com](http://www.experimentalaction.com)

(One of the few musical performances throughout the night)



Lastly, here's a great picture of my girlfriend during the first act containing nudity. I didn't bother to tell her she'd be seeing naked people last night. She had a great time, and even enjoyed the piece overall, this simply captures her annoyance that I did not warn her. That was my performance for the night.

---

By Joshua Richards | February 24th, 2017 | Uncategorized | 1 Comment

---

Share This Story, Choose Your Platform!

