

DieSpace: A Lively Look At Death

It's not often that you hear the words "elderly" and "technology" in the same sentence and you never hear "death" and "digital" in so much as the same phrase, unless you attend DieSpace by Pips:lab March 22 through the 24. This production is part of Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's Distinctively Dutch Festival.

DieSpace is what you get when you put four creative men from the Netherlands discussing death and aging together with multimedia and audience participation. This production gives a moment of comic relief to the common fears of senior citizens: fear of the unknown afterlife, fear of dying, and fear of technology. DieSpace is MySpace for the dead, complete with a membership fee, music, and video uploads. "We are not going to heaven. We are not going to hell. We are going to upload to DieSpace."

This performance is a non-intimidating audiovisual tech fest that utilizes music, video and software designed specifically for the show by Pips:lab. The interactive nature of the production makes you forget how morbid the reality of becoming older and dying. It makes the inevitable laughable.

The set, or lack thereof, in a stage less space made for a rather intimate but fun 60 minutes. The space was a simple laboratory of sorts complete with a projection screen, musical instruments, and several laptops among a few other things. The integration of these mediums coupled with the interesting subject matter made a set unnecessary.

Seeing two of the four men dressed as and playing the roles of elderly women was quite striking. I wonder how different the production would be had these roles been played by women.

This was certainly a unique experience in both subject matter and execution. The crowd was fairly young and I couldn't help but wonder how the 65 and up would react to this production. The young audience present opening night seemed to enjoy the entertainment but without fully understanding the why of it. Without the traditional plot to follow, this was more like experimental theater.

If I ever had a doubt that technology and theater can and should work together, this was an impressive demonstration of the endless possibilities that can result from the meeting of the two.