

In the End...

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Artifacts of Consequence

Discussing ways to prevent the bleak, global future scientists and environmental activists are currently predicting is an effort of hope; facing the reality of what may be if those efforts fail is the fitting subject of this play. Ashlin Halfnight's *Artifacts of Consequence* examines the dark side of the coin as we flip for tomorrow.

The play is set at some point in the apocalypse, after the beginning and before the very end, in the domain of a makeshift government shelter designed to store the mementos of humanity. Borrowing the uniforms of postal service employees, the outpost is manned by two official employees who are not only responsible for hundreds of catalogued souls but the trace evidence of mankind itself.

Rebecca Lingafelter (Minna) gives the performance that makes this production. Her intense commitment to this dire world is what makes it palpable. Tiptoeing a fine line that divides efficiency and insanity, with a sternness in keeping with her character, Lingafelter still manages to allow Minna's humanity to breath through. Though she is responsible for the story's most heinous acts, in the end she is the one who wins the most sympathy. Jayd McCarty (Dallas) is believable as an esthete out of his element but hard to accept as a man that could survive the harshness of the war zone beyond the shelter. Ultimately, he lacks the edge one would expect in a man having to exist this most Darwinian of existences. Sara Buffamanti (Ari) gives her all to the somewhat one-dimensional Eve that is her character. She exudes the natural excitements and curiosities of youth but is given little else to play with. Similarly fated by the material, Marty Keiser (Theo) fails to define his character. He makes his final exit leaving us with as little understanding of who he is as we had when he first entered.

The play's three other characters, labeled only as The Actors, have the thankless job of performing excerpts of American drama and musical theater, which seem to be the only cultural accomplishments that Dallas is interested in saving during his journeys topside. These moments of performance bring an almost absurdist element to an otherwise stark, anti-utopian piece and are more disruptive than supportive. In this same vein of distraction, much of the play's attempts at humor are also misplaced.

Playwright Ashlin Halfnight paints this dismal future very clearly yet seems to have little to say about it aside from society being more interested in preserving hula-hoops and Converse sneakers over any of its more profound achievements. He also gets into some trouble with defining the motivations of his characters: Minna and Dallas are both initially very opposed to Theo's presence, but then abruptly change their minds on the matter. It's understood that they're willing to accept him for Ari's sake, but since Theo makes no real proof of his character or intentions, it is confusing why these parental figures should decide to trust him so quickly.

The production gets an A+ for use of the space. Jennifer de Fouchier's design incorporates the natural look of the theater marvelously, garnishing it with the necessary fixtures to make this industrial fallout shelter a reality. Mark Valadez's sound design snaps with a cold and unfeeling finality, complementary to the piece's mood. Overall the play makes for an interesting evening, offering its audience the sort of edgy and experimental experience that is sought from Off-Off Broadway stage. - C. Jefferson Thom

Artifacts of Consequence runs through May 2 at [Wild Project](#), 195 East Third Street in Manhattan.

Mr. Thom lives in New York City and walks dogs, writes plays, and loves dissecting pop culture.