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Bash Compactor: Meet Your Maker

Gerry Visco attends the exhibit *Let It End Like This*, curated by Todd Zuniga

By Gerry Visco



James J. Williams III, standing in front of his drawing. / Photo by Gerry Visco

I hate to bring up an unpleasant topic, but just a tiny reminder: We're all gonna die some day. But hopefully not too soon. That's what the word "mortality" means. So naturally, I was, well, *dying* to go see the exhibit *Let It End Like This*, curated by **Todd Zuniga**, editor of *Opium* magazine, at **Apexart** down on Church Street. The opening was packed; I guess everyone there had a death wish.

"I invited people whose work I deeply admire to create their own obituary," Zuniga said. "If you could name your future, what would you decide?" I had a few ideas, but I wasn't sure if they were legal.

Despite the relatively small size of the space, 44 artists had created their future deaths in various media, including paintings, drawings, text, photographs, sculpture, video, audio and more. It was, however, disappointing that there was nary a corpse at the gallery. All of the warm bodies seemed to be the artists themselves, friends, the usual collector types and one very much alive dog. Then there was Brooklyn artist **James J. Williams III**, standing in front of his drawing.

"Can you stand in front of your piece with your mouth open, too?" I asked, snapping his photo. "How are you going to die?" I continued. Williams reached over to a display holding a tape recorder and played the story of his final exit. But that's the problem with art openings: the hubbub. I'd need to schedule a return visit to this show, dedicated to life's end. Ironically, focusing on death in some ways brought our attention to the quirky lives of these artists.

For example, writer **Tao Lin**, who didn't seem to be in the room, had provided screenshots of his posthumous Internet presence, ranging from his Gmail inbox to his Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr pages, his ironic commentary on how empty life can be when it's all conducted online. What the hell do you do with a dead person's Facebook profile? My dearly departed grandmother wouldn't have understood that, but she would have loved **Quentin Miller's** slab of granite with the blunt epigraph, "Shut Up!" After a few glasses of wine, I wandered over to a wall to read British poet **John Osborne's** poem: "I sometimes forget that we're all going to die": "It's hard to imagine my housemate coming home to find me unconscious at the bottom of the stairs my head cracked against the radiator the carpet spattered with blood." I decided then and there to give my roommate my sister's phone number— I'm not so sure that death would become me.



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