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Arts & Entertainment



THEATER/FINE ARTS

Saturday, September 18, 2004

She proposes to wed herself till art do her part

By REGINA HACKETT
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER ART CRITIC

Amy Ellen Trefsger likes to walk around with the word "engaged" on her forehead. The word signals that she's alert, awake and aware, but it also means that she's engaged to be married.

To herself.

Saturday at 2 p.m. in Golden Gardens Park, Trefsger will marry herself, complete with matrons of art (bridesmaids), the tying of a huge knot, her vows, music and dance. If it rains, the event will be moved to the Center on Contemporary Art, 410 Dexter Ave. N., and take place at 7:30 p.m. At 8 p.m., there's a party for the bride and the bride at CoCA, with a suggested donation of \$5.

Trefsger, 29, didn't invent the idea of saying "I do" to the person in the mirror.

According to Sasha Cagen, who wrote a singles manifesto titled "Quirky Alone," women marrying themselves has become a mini-trend. "Sex in the City" devoted part of an episode to it.

But Trefsger's ceremony isn't a "Quirky Alone" declaration. She's borrowing the form of marriage to commit to her creative self, not to give up on men, romance or even a solid thing with somebody.

But even if the right somebody comes along, Trefsger sees her life as two distinct paths. First, there's showing up at her day job, paying the rent, buying and eating food and making sure she has clean underwear.

Second, there's her creative life as an artist.

"Artists make art and often they stop and let their creative selves die," Trefsger said. "I want to declare myself committed to my art, that I'll always do what it takes to keep the art going."

To give her creative self



zoom Meryl Schenker / P-I
Amy Trefsger seems to be having a traditional wedding. The cake, however, is concrete and the other half of the couple is the bride herself.

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TO GIVE HER CREATIVE SELF a clear and distinct personality, she gave it a separate name: flatchestedmama



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"Nobody could pronounce my last name, so I came up with an easy to remember moniker," she said.

The one she chose suggests there's little mothering to be had from her.

"I have a cactus and that's all I want to take care of," she said.

Trefsgger doesn't exhibit often in galleries, unless they are do-it-yourself galleries or artist cooperatives, although she participated in "Domicile" at CoCA in July. Being a literalist, she interpreted the theme literally and moved into the gallery, sleeping there at night in a narrow bed, looking out on an empty street.

She's best known for her street performances and mail art. Mail art is a form that remains solidly under the radar, an artist-to-artist exchange that's rarely reviewed, exhibited or purchased by collectors.

"You have to give it to get it," she said, looking at baskets of decorated missives she has received from around the globe. Not all mail art is mail in the usual sense, but if it's stamped and isn't ticking, the Post Office will deliver it.

In honor of the form, she created a four-tier, concrete cake for tonight's party. Instead of the couple that customarily sinks their plastic feet into the frosting, she made a mail box as a cake topper.

Get it? She's marrying her mail art.

In a bow to tradition, her father will give her away. The P.A.N. Dance Collective will perform. A few people will read poems and some music will be played.

Her matrons of art are all artists: Eroyn Franklin, Caffeine (Cathleen Bozek), Andrea Gardner, Tory Franklin and Erin Torlin.

They're making their own bouquets (art, of course) and wearing blue dresses, even if they have to take a white dress and paint it blue. Anything for a pal.

Sam Trout photographed Trefsgger in her Value Village wedding dress and her roller skates with girly pink wheels. She had them made into stamps: one of herself sitting on the floor and one of just the skates, with the hem of her frilly white dress showing.

"I'm excited," she said. "I hope I've thought of everything."



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P-I art critic Regina Hackett can be reached at 206-448-8332 or reginahackett@seattlepi.com.

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