

THE QUALITY OF LIGHT

PETER VAN RIPER'S "PHOTOGRAPHS: MICRO/MACRO"

*The minute
You talk too much
About something*

*It destroys
The emanation
The smell
—from "it" by Peter Van Riper*

I wandered around downtown until almost dark, searching half-heartedly for a gallery I had never seen. I was curious, wondering what this place was all about. Everything was reminiscent of the "Big City" at dusk. It was how all cities are when the sun is going down: deserted, anticipating, and breathing with the life of buildings and light.

by Nola Eaglin

I entered into a warm gathering of individuals contemplating images and music. A foreign kind of music trickled through the room. A series of sounds that rang ancient and everlasting in my ears: meditative pieces offering a rhythm and a pattern of tones that I could not easily predict. There, at the Nonsequitor Music Gallery, music sets the stage for everything, and that night it was for Peter Van Riper, artist and musician.

He was present at the reception, employing himself as a warm and receptive reference to the work. He was open to questions and sporadic performances with instruments he had created himself. All of this gave the show an unfettered and natural feeling.

"Kosta Contact Diptych" and "Kosta Contact Triptych" wait on the other side of the room. There is a luminescent circular image in the center that looked to me like the light at the end of the tunnel. The images are strong, microscopic-looking pieces blown up to give perspective and detail. It seemed they could be the image of something alive like one of those insects that lives off of our dead skin, or something not alive like hair, or a tiny piece of something presented as if it were whole.

"Coral in Computer #1-5" features underwater coral in laser light. They are bright neon images whose color composition was assigned by a computer program according to the density of light in the original photos. I began to think of light—the quality of it and its presence in our lives. While looking at the photos I considered that one of the ways that light manifests itself in our lives is through the television and the computer. Though many of us consider these mediums of society to be detrimental to the welfare of the soul, they are nonetheless forms of light and may be seen as a substitute for the "immaculate glow" or perhaps as light's strength to permeate even the darkest of situations—like the late 20th century.

Included in the show are three short video presentations to music composed and performed by Van Riper. The last and longest of the three is situated in a room which may be his. The camera moves slowly and painstakingly through the room that is empty save a few instruments and pieces of furniture. Over and over again we are shown all of the aspects of the room: the walls, the doorways, the wooden floors, and on and on, forcing us to become intimate with the emptiness/fullness of the space in the room. Occasionally the camera catches Peter playing one of the instruments.

I sat there waiting for a story line, feeling certain there would be none, but I watched and listened. After 20 minutes or so I began wondering how it was going to end. At some point a noise distracted me from the video and suddenly I became aware of the room that I was in: the shelves, the windows, the floor, and yes, the quality of light. To be present. *To be.* It took time and a level of concentration I am not used to employing with video, but finally I was *there...* and then I left.

Peter Van Riper will be featuring art and music through September 20 at the Nonsequitor Music Gallery, 317 5th St. SW.

