

A Slight Headache? Bit of an Understatement.

By Trav S.D.

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Details:

A Slight Headache

By Alyson Pou

South Street Seaport Museum

213 Water Street, 212-868-4444

The title of Alyson Pou's new



performance piece *A Slight Headache* is a bit of humorous understatement. The outré plot concerns a mother-daughter team of sideshow freaks joined at the hair; the psychic daughter, Athena-like, was born out of her mother's head. The two hate each other, the daughter forever searching for the scissors that will finally (and perhaps fatally) cut them asunder. Pou, who plays both parts, has devised a concept rich in metaphorical and mythological resonance, evoking everything from *Carnivàle* to *How to Get Ahead in Advertising*.

But this hardly hints at the show's allure: It's done as a period piece, set in a Victorian-era dime museum. Pou and designer Robert Eggers have done an amazing job of re-creating one of these now-extinct institutions, which mixed elements of freak show, science museum, theater, and lecture hall. The environment includes a lush gallery with whimsical exhibits such as crocodile mummies and the skull of a baby Cyclops, all revealed to us by a mustachioed lecturer (Gregory Cohen Frumin). Neither Frumin nor Pou could be confused with major 19th-century thespians, but if the histrionics on view are a little shaky at times, the vision that undergirds the event is prodigious.