

What is the meaning of 'Life Game'?

By BOB GARRETT

"Don't take what I say. After all I just work here," said Harry Binder, after a 10 minute explication on the various parts and possible meanings of "Life Game," a large environmental sculpture constructed in the sunken courtyard in the Boston Architectural Center.

Binder, a grey haired security guard, has thought the whole thing through. He sits fuming at his desk.

"That's the beginning," Binder points to a platform on which lies a half dozen black disaster bags each of them stuffed with a dummy to give the appearance of a corpse.

"This thing here must be a conveyor belt," he nods at a runway on which is one disaster bag.

The conveyor belt leads to

a sort of pavillion formed by four steel girders.

A disaster bag perches on a surface made of glass pinball machine panels featuring flashy motifs — Broadway, minstrel show, space travel, poolside beauties.

Suspended above this by the girders is an opaque box with a jigsaw design on it. Two long steel coils hang down from the box, resembling giant vacuum cleaner hoses with attachments on the ends. One hose rests like a stethoscope on the chest-area of the disaster bag. The other snakes across the pinball panel surface.

"THE HANGING thing

ART

lifts the body to the box, which is heaven or whatever. The box is supposed to have lights flashing. It twinkles like a Christmas tree, only it's not twinkling now because the artist hasn't come in to fix it."

Binder mutters to himself as he steps down into the courtyard to check the wiring and plugs. He avoids an area of the floor which the artist has covered with sand and bones. It looks like an archeological dig site.

"The Bible says ashes to ashes, and that's what this sand is supposed to be. Help me with this bench, will you? I want to block off this area. This may be environmental art, but I don't want people tracking the environment through the building."

Binder muses over a fact sheet on the sculptor, Thoms Faulkner, a young artist whose studio is at the Boston Center for the Arts.

Faulkner is an ordained minister, still practicing Sundays at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge. He began sculpting at Dartmouth, but put his work down in the late sixties to become a youth

worker. He took up art again about three years ago, studying at the San Francisco Art Institute and elsewhere.

BINDER FROWNS. "Why would a minister want to do something like this?"

To make people reflect on their mortality, on life and what comes after?

"Possibly. But let me tell you something, the average person is not going to appreciate it. People don't want to bother interpreting this thing."

Binder proceeded to spin out his philosophy of life, invoking the beer commer-

cial ("you only go around once"), reflecting that as far as he was concerned you shouldn't depend on a hereafter — you have to make a heaven or hell on earth.

For someone protesting his indifference, Binder was waving rather eloquent. The artist could hardly have asked for a stronger reaction from an "average person."

"I know about art. My father is a famous Boston portraitist, Jacob Bonder. He's still alive. Go talk to him about art, he won't give you baloney or any stores."

"LIFE GAME," an "environment" by Thomas Faulkner, features a conveyor belt on which disaster bags are shuttled. The bags await processing on a pinball machine surface. Suspended above is a box with flashing light. The piece is on view in the sunken courtyard of the Boston Architectural Center, 320 Newbury st.

