

TORONTO STAR
Oct 3, 2006



TARA WALTON/STAR FILE PHOTO

Spectators wait their turn for a walk through the man-made fog at *Fog in Toronto #71624* by Fujiko Nakaya on Philosopher's Walk during Nuit Blanche at the weekend.

■ NUIT BLANCHE

Unforgettable experience

Anyone who was there will never forget joining thousands snaking down Philosopher's Walk

Re Goodnight
Oct. 2.

Last weekend's Nuit Blanche was an unforgettable experience. Hundreds of thousands of people, young and old, crowding our city's streets, parks, cultural institutions and private galleries throughout the night. One of the overwhelming impressions was of constant movement — people always moving. Anyone who was there will never forget joining thousands snaking down Philosopher's Walk in the dark. One of my favourite performance installations

was outside the Bata Shoe Museum, by Mario Martinelli who came from Italy for this. A constantly shifting group of about 50 people running and jumping to throw giant shadows on a phosphorescent panel. Everyone applauding and laughing. The museum was closed because the institution was rented to a wedding party. But around 12:30 a.m., the bride and groom came out and danced for the flash-pod to add their shadow portraits to the event.

Really, I was stunned to experience such joy and enthusiasm from the

many hundreds of people I was always surrounded by. When we entered the ROM at 1:30 a.m., a guard with a counter said that at that point 10,000 people had come through the doors. And who will forget the dome of the McLaughlin Planetarium with Michael Snow's *Counting Sheep?* Sublime beauty.

Another indelible effect was the sound of conversation and laughter in the air — as if the whole city had become one giant fairground. At 2:30 a.m., I was in the University of Toronto Art Centre looking at the Malcove collection of medieval art with literally hundreds of people. All strangers to each other and everyone enthusiastically chatting with their neighbours. Four people, none of

whom knew each other, were comparing notes on Cranach the Elder's magnificent *Adam and Eve* painting. One young woman said, "Who knew we had these places in Toronto?" To say this was anything less than a miracle would be an understatement.

I don't have the words to express my amazement at the enormous spirit of community I experienced. Queen St. W. was still overcrowded with visitors when my friends and I decided to have a snack in a restaurant still open at 3:30 a.m. and head for home in a taxi. It was the driver's first night driving a cab — more lively conversation.

It was a big, beautiful surprise party.

Flavio Belli, Toronto