



Nuit Blanche draws crowds to U of T

By Catherine Ngai, posted *Monday, October 6, 2008*

On one restless night last weekend, the University of Toronto threw its doors open from dusk until dawn and joined the rest of the city celebrating the arts. This year's Scotiabank Nuit Blanche brought about a million art enthusiasts to the streets to experience a full night of contemporary art and performance. The event featured over 150 original creations that were scattered throughout the city, a number of which were on the St. George campus.

Nuit Blanche is an annual arts festival that offers the public unrestricted access into the minds of imaginative artists and their innovative works. It highlights and boasts the best of the city's art culture scene. At 6:52pm on Oct. 4, the university welcomed the art-savvy public to events and installations in six different locations.

On the music front, the Faculty of Music presented "Déjà, Presque, Jamais: three views of creative sound." Students from the faculty performed pieces from composers such as Messiaen and Debussy, as well as improvisational works. Through a multitude of mediums such as on toy piano, spoken word, and electro-acoustic and visual accompaniment, the audience were treated to a complexity of echos, rhythms and composition.

The Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design hosted an informational and visually appealing display about the importance of ownership in streets. The exhibit, "The Street Belongs to All of Us," is a thought-provoking display on the necessities of keeping urban streets clean, safe and accessible.

U of T's other exhibits were Sweet Dreams and Willflowers of Manitoba at Hart House, Adoration Street by Atom Egoyan, and Vehicle at the U of T Arts Centre. Sweet Dreams explored the capacity of the imagination in the interstices of dreaming and waking, and its possibilities to conjure imaginary futures, ideals and fantasies to transform the everyday. Willflowers of Manitoba was an installation that used as its points of reference the utopic worldviews of love revolutions in the '60s and the grand gestures of world exhibitions of the same decade. Adoration Street reconstructed the suburban streetscape in which Egoyan shot his most recent award-winning film, while Vehicle presented a multi-car, multi-artist exploration of the aesthetic possibilities of the car as a site of community contact.

"Nuit Blanche at U of T was a success again this year. All of our projects had steady flow of visitors, always full, but never getting too cramped or congested, which made for a much more enjoyable viewing experience over past years," said Jason Van Eyk, director of ArtsZone, U of T's umbrella arts organization. "Visitors really seemed to stay and absorb what each project had to offer, rather than running the contemporary art marathon that Nuit Blanche can be. In the end, I think this speaks to the success of each U of T Nuit Blanche, the quality of the art and exhibitions we present, and our capacity to put on great projects that capture a broad public's imagination and attention."

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