

A special Nuit to remember

A&E Editor **Daniel Joseph** found himself last Saturday at Nuit Blanche in Toronto's Downtown Core for a night of art overload



DANIEL JOSEPH
A&E EDITOR

Last Saturday night saw one of Canada's largest art parties take place in Toronto. Nuit Blanche: an all-night art party that takes over large portions of downtown Toronto, and in the process throws more than 750 artists onto the streets.

The avenues filling with many a pedestrian, all looking to see what wacky and innovative installations they might happen upon, I joined in the fray to frolic in said festivities.

I began my night out at 1:30 in the morning. Normally, when somebody starts an evening at 1:30 in the morning something has gone terribly wrong – but in the case of Nuit Blanche, this was more than acceptable. The streets on Dundas near Spadina were teeming with revelers and massive groups of people. Many were in groups that, due to their size, found themselves yelling at the top of their lungs to organize their progress through the night.

One of the first pieces that I happened upon was a massive web of rope located at the Italian embassy.

Here was an exhibit titled Euro-night 08 that focuses on European culture and art. It was comprised mostly of large screens projecting silent films with subtitles, accompanied by ominous music created by string sections. With all of the odd ambient music, silent films and aforementioned web, guests to the display were clearly finding something to absorb and enjoy.

Along the way this reporter found himself down near the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) – which, by the way, is a misnomer because it actually is an accredited university. Here the coolest exhibit, titled “A Dream of Pastures,” embodied everything that Nuit Blanche is purported to be – which is to say, it required the darkness of the night, was huge and encouraged audience participation.

For this display, a willing member of the audience would break the usual viewer-artist fourth wall and become a part of the exhibit. This new proto-artist would take a seat on a bicycle connected to a mechanical contraption that used the principles of a film projector to project an image of the bike rider on the back of a horse on the adjacent wall, through clever use of shadow. At some points a rider would engage in an act of perfor-

mance or comedy that would elicit a hail of applause. “A Dream of Pastures” is something that most likely wouldn't have had the same impact without the amazing setting.

Not far from OCAD another exhibit (if it could be called that) featuring loud music was occurring. Upon inspection it became clear to me that it was a rave on wheels. Really. Many people wonder what happened to rave culture – well, I found it. It hangs out in a pickup truck with massive speakers and three DJs at Nuit Blanche.

If there is something that defines Nuit Blanche, it's this sense of not knowing what is around the corner. It's a sense of discovery – but you also have to take the bad with the good.

Zombies patrolled the streets of Toronto, as an added bonus for the thrill-seekers looking to spot comically gruesome characters. One fellow attendee, Daniel Ehrenworth, found the zombies a little boring, but recommended that I check out “the trashcan that is having a concert.” I checked out the trashcan. It was, indeed, having a concert. Inside. There were stage lights and fog machines. I'm not joking. From this point on, between the zombies and trashcan concerts, nothing could really surprise me — even the mas-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

ZANY BOOKS - Tom Bedtsen's *Conversation #2* was on display.

sive game of Tetris being played on City Hall.

Overall, Nuit Blanche more than lived up to my expectations. I had been told it was going to be boring – and I found it to be anything but. Just the amount of people out wandering around made for an exciting event to attend – and with huge art exhibits to keep your attention, the entire ordeal made for an exciting late night out on the town.

If you aren't from Toronto, but find the prospect of wandering around the big city for an entire night – and then sleeping on the bus on the way back to Waterloo – extremely intriguing, you should definitely make plans to attend next year. It really is the last big artsy hurrah here in southern Ontario before we are inundated with cold wind and weather.