

Crossing Streams

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Presented by the Canadian Clay and Glass Invisible Streams: As Above, So Below featured the work of artist Alfred Engerer, including Cahill Warehouse, pictured above.

Nuit Blanche hosts Waterloo's Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery

Nuit Blanche has come and gone with its usual fanfare, and the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery made a celebrated contribution. It was their first time at the all-night art festival, and their exhibit *Invisible Streams: As Above, So Below* by contemporary artist Alfred Engerer was a glowing success.

At King St. W. and Bay St., luminescent neon lights were suspended in the air between some of Toronto's spare trees. Fluidly dynamic, Engerer's installation was built of bent neon tubes in the center and hand blown neon for the extremities. Varying diameters of tubes demonstrated the flow of the stream in its physical sense, and various colours were produced by changing the colour of the glass, the gas inside, and phosphorescent powder.

For those intimidated by modern art, there is nothing to fear, as *Invisible Streams* is a beautiful neon light display that is thought-provoking and open to individual interpretation, yet accessible.

Featuring wave-shaped tubes fashioned to demonstrate the flow of a current and an eddy of light in the middle, *Invisible Streams* provides a familiar spectacle of neon lights, but with a deep premise that really reaches out to onlookers.

“There are two things going on here. First, it’s about the beauty of coloured neon and glass. Second, the invisible streams all around us. Streams of air, streams of consciousness, and the physical streams of water underneath us right now,” Engerer said.

The artist basked in the glow of his installation with pride, while people coursed by in the heart of Toronto. Crowds gathered around to look, awed by the colourful glow of the neon tubes arcing through the air like the waves of a stream. There was a hush as their eyes were naturally drawn to the centre tree where the neon lights fused into a mishmash of images. Familiar shapes were interwoven with phrases, creating a jumble of bits and pieces, which were vaguely recognizable.

Focus was placed on the conscious, as minds tried to make sense of brand name signs, such as Coors and Coca-Cola, mixed with words like “True” and “YSLEEP,” and vibrant animal shapes. Engerer even went so far as to test the human perception with optical illusions — are they lobster claws or red deer antlers? No one really knows.

The result was a prolonged feeling of recognition without being able to place any names or details. Simultaneously frustrating and amazing, looking around, everyone was deep in contemplation, creating a sense of community.

“It brings out the urban lust in the city. People living in urban environments realizing there’s energy out here amongst all these buildings and this landscape. Nuit Blanche brings that out. There is evidence of the life that is worth living out here in Toronto, in other places where a scene is going on right now,” Engerer says of his work.

Invisible Streams is a beautiful art piece on several levels. The gorgeous glow of multi-coloured neon lights at night is appreciated by all, and the symbolism leaves plenty to think about. The only exhibit the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery contributed this year, Invisible Streams was a smashing success at Nuit Blanche and well-placed. For those that missed out, Invisible Streams will be coming home to the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery in 2013 for public viewing pleasure.