

THROUGH “THE FOREST OF THINGS, ACTS, AND SIGNS”:  
A STUDY OF EDMONTON’S *THE WORKS ART AND DESIGN FESTIVAL* AND  
*NUIT BLANCHE*

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## Abstract

This thesis explores large-scale public arts festivals that function under a narrative of greater inclusivity and accessibility for audiences. More specifically, it examines the ways in which these emergent curatorial strategies reconfigure the role of the spectator, while maintaining an emphasis on such cultural practices within the prairie region of Canada. Since 2003, numerous festivals have begun popping up across the country, from Halifax to Whitehorse, yet there is relatively little academic scholarship on the presence of these events in a Canadian context. By taking Edmonton, Alberta, as its case study, this analysis will investigate how the dissemination of interdisciplinary arts practices across nonconventional exhibition sites complicates our understanding of spectators.

This thesis examines two public arts festivals that took place in Edmonton in 2015. Known for branding itself “Canada’s Festival City,” this year marked both its 30th annual *Works Art and Design Festival* (June 19–July 1, 2015) and its inaugural *Nuit Blanche* (September 26–27, 2015). While *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche* vary greatly in structure, with the former happening over several days and the latter for only one night, both events showcase a range of curated projects by artists of local, regional, national and international reputation in order to temporarily “transform” Edmonton’s downtown core. Most importantly, *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche* claim to re-imagine ordinary public spaces as free sites of exchange, where citizens become cultural producers, rather than complacent spectators.

The theoretical framework of this thesis is influenced by Jacques Rancière’s *The Emancipated Spectator*. For Rancière, “the collective power of spectators” is not derived from their role in a communal body, but their existence as subjects “plotting their own

paths in the forest of things, acts, and signs that confront or surround them.”<sup>1</sup> This thesis, therefore, underlines how spectators are addressed through the festivals’ promotional materials, exhibition programming, and media coverage in the context of scholars and curators whose work focuses on issues of audience, place, and spectacle.

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 16.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this research to my amazing family. To my parents, Karen and Nick, who have always encouraged me to pursue my passions. Thank you for your unconditional love and support. Without you, none of this would be possible. I would also like to thank my brothers, Leland and Spencer, for always being there for me. Finally, I would like to also dedicate this research to David, who has been by my side throughout this entire process with unfailing support and much needed humour.

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## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Edmonton Public Arts Festivals: A Case Study

This thesis explores how the proliferation of large-scale public arts festivals motivates a discussion of the emergent curatorial practices functioning under a narrative of greater inclusivity and accessibility for audiences. More specifically, it examines the curatorial strategies that use interdisciplinary methodology in alternative exhibition models, while maintaining an emphasis on such cultural practices within the prairie region of Canada. The interest in this particular region of Canada is motivated by interdisciplinary approaches to issues of “identity” explored in recent cultural studies of the prairies,<sup>2</sup> and how this literature might relate to the current discourses on urban arts festivals. By taking Edmonton, Alberta, as its case study, this analysis will investigate how the dissemination of interdisciplinary arts practices across nonconventional exhibition sites complicates our understanding of spectators and the conceptualization of place.

It seems appropriate to begin this chapter with a detailed explanation for how and why this case study was chosen. The investigation is informed by contemporary scholars, artists, and curators who instigated the dissolution of the borders that have traditionally separated artistic disciplines by incorporating interdisciplinary perspectives into their

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<sup>2</sup> In recent years, there have been a number of scholarly publications focused on the prairie region of Canada. Some examples include: Sarah Carter, Alvin Finkel and Peter Fortna, eds, *The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010); Max Foran, ed. *Icon, Brand, Myth: The Calgary Stampede* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2008); Christine Ramsay and Randal Rogers, eds. *Overlooking Saskatchewan: Minding the Gap* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2014); Robert Seiler and Tamara Seiler. *Reel Time: Movie Exhibitors and Movie Audiences in Prairie Canada, 1896 to 1986* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2013); Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010); and the influential *Toward Defining the Prairies: Region, Culture, and History* edited by Robert Wardhaugh (Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2001).

practice to explore cultural constructions of space and subjectivity. In the 1990s, substantial academic scholarship began encouraging galleries to abandon the ceremonial reverence that permeated the Modernist art gallery, in favour of a self-reflexive approach to exhibition design that would include a wider public less concerned with disciplinary boundaries.<sup>3</sup> Although the dialogue concerning interdisciplinary practices that travel freely between the “white cube” of the art gallery and the “black box” of the cinema or theatre space is now well-established,<sup>4</sup> the attempts to reconceptualise these issues within non-traditional and urban sites is still a comparatively new topic of interest in academic scholarship.

In recent years, this dissolution of boundaries has not only challenged the relationship between different artistic forms and their usual modes of display, but has also challenged the separation between these institutional spaces and those of everyday

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<sup>3</sup> This thesis owes a great debt to the scholars and curators that began to challenge museum practices and curatorial strategies at the end of the twentieth century. These influential works include: Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (San Francisco: The Lapis Press, 1986 [1976]); Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010); Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); and Kenneth Hudson, “The Museum Refuses to Stand Still.” In *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. Bettina Messias Carbonell, 85–92 (Malden: Blackwell, 2004 [1998]).

<sup>4</sup> The scholarship concerning expanded cinema and lens-based installation practices is well-established. One of the earliest works to focus on the divide between film and visual arts practice is Gene Youngblood’s seminal text, *Expanded Cinema* (see Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: Dutton, 1970). More recent texts on this area include: Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013); Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists’ Cinema: Space, Site and Screen* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2009); Tamara Trodd, *Screen/Space: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); and Andrew Uroskie, *Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Expanded Cinema and Postwar Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

life: in other words, the borders that once differentiated what an exhibition space is from what it is not are increasingly permeable. The public arts festival is, perhaps, one of the clearest examples of these phenomena. For example, the rise of public arts festivals was the subject of a symposium hosted by McGill University in November, 2014, which invited scholars and curators to contribute to the discussion of how the “festivalization of cities” has “altered traditional models of exhibition, spectatorship and participation in arts communities.”<sup>5</sup> This is consistent with the recent appearance of a number of journal articles and scholarly texts, published in the last ten years, which cover a range of topics pertaining to visual art, film, and performance festivals worldwide.<sup>6</sup> Included in these discourses are contributions by notable Canadian scholars such as Janine Marchessault, who has argued that the early history of world’s fairs, such as Canada’s own Universal Exposition, more commonly referred to as *Expo ’67*, served as an important precursor to “the model of decentralized communication that defines today’s alternative media networks.”<sup>7</sup> William Straw has also investigated the recent trend towards festival

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<sup>5</sup> “Urban Arts Festivals in Canada,” (Colloquium on Urban Arts Festivals in Canada, McGill University, Montreal, QC, November 21, 2014), accessed January 21, 2017, <https://www.mcgill.ca/channels/event/urban-arts-festivals-canada-239788>.

<sup>6</sup> Some examples, which are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three and Chapter Four of this thesis are: Byrdie-Leigh Bartleet and Huib Schippers, “Redefining Places for Art: The Contemporary Metropolis as “Many Cities,” in *After Sprawl: Post-Suburban Sydney*, ed. Kay Anderson et al. (Parramatta: University of Western Sydney, 2006); Vince Dziekan and Sven Mehzoud, “Activating exUrbanScreens: Applying Curatorial Design toward Affective Experience in Civic Media Spectacles,” *Curator* 57, no. 4 (2014): 485–504; Kristie Jamieson, “Tracing Festival Imaginaries: Between Affective Urban Idioms and Administrative Assemblages,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (2013): 1–11; and George Yúdice, “The Heuristics of Contemporary Urban Art Interventions,” *Public* 32 (2005): 8–21.

<sup>7</sup> Janine Marchessault, “Multi-Screens and Future Cinema: The Labyrinth Project at Expo ’67,” in *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema*, ed. Janine Marchessault and Susan Lord (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 48.

structures in urban spaces and their impact on the divisions that have traditionally separated daytime and night-time arts economies.<sup>8</sup>

The recent scholarship concerning public arts festivals in Canada is significant for two reasons. First, it has helped to establish a context for further exploration of the aesthetics and politics of interdisciplinary public arts festivals in the context of spectatorship and curatorial discourse. Second, while these analyses provide the necessary foundation for such investigations, most academic research has remained focused almost exclusively on the role of the festival model in large urban centres such as Toronto, Ontario.<sup>9</sup> This neglects the range of arts festivals that now take place across Canada, as many cities have begun adapting the festival structure within their own communities over the past decade. For example, since the popular one-night-only arts event *Nuit Blanche* made its Canadian debut in Montreal, Quebec, in 2003, variations of the event have emerged in many other cities including Toronto, Calgary, Halifax, Kitchener, Saskatoon, St. John's, Whitehorse, and Winnipeg.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> William Straw, "The Urban Night," in *Cartographies of Place: Navigating the Urban*, ed. Michael Darroch and Janine Marchessault (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2014), 198.

<sup>9</sup> The few scholarly publications on public arts festivals in Canada are largely focused on events taking place in major centres such as Toronto, including: Gwen MacGregor, "The Past, Present, and Future of Toronto's *Nuit Blanche* from the Perspective of Artists and Curators" (Major Research Paper, University of Toronto, 2014); Heather Mclean, "Cracks in the Creative City: The Contradictions of Community Arts Practice," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 6 (2014): 2156–73; Siobhan O'Flynn, "Nuit Blanche and Transformational Publics," *Public* 23, no. 45 (2012): 23–34.

<sup>10</sup> James Adams, "Has Toronto's *Nuit Blanche* grown too big for its own good?" *Globe and Mail*, September 25, 2015, accessed January 21, 2017, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/has-torontos-nuit-blanche-grown-too-big-for-its-own-good/article26547483/>.

The expansion of urban arts festivals throughout Canada has also received widespread media attention, as evidenced by a full-page article published in the *Globe and Mail* in anticipation of *Nuit Blanche Toronto*'s tenth anniversary. Surveying the statistical data from previous *Nuit Blanche* events in Toronto, including visitor numbers and its positive economic impact, *Globe and Mail* Arts reporter James Adams states that "Toronto's success has sparked *Nuit Blanche*-like start-ups in at least fifteen communities in the last five years."<sup>11</sup> Among the examples given are new festivals in Kamloops, British Columbia, and Huntsville, Ontario, as well as Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Included in this list was Edmonton, which was juxtaposed as "the new kid on the block"<sup>12</sup> in relation to Toronto's own well-established festival.

Although the specific one-night only format of *Nuit Blanche* may have been new to Edmonton in 2015, the public festival is by no means a new concept for the provincial capital. Known for branding itself "Canada's Festival City,"<sup>13</sup> even a cursory Internet search yields a considerable number of tourism websites and newspaper articles promoting the numerous festivals taking place in the city every year.<sup>14</sup> These various spectacles have also been the subject of academic critique and debate. Faye Ginsburg cites the Dreamspeakers Film Festival, which was founded in Edmonton in 1992, as the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> R. Hayter, M. Phair, and K. Leibovici, "Economic Development Edmonton 'Branding Edmonton' Initiative" (Report for Executive Committee, City of Edmonton, March 28, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> The motto "Canada's Festival City" appears in media coverage of Edmonton's festivals as early as May 2003. See Adrienne Lamb, "Edmonton to sell itself as Festival City," *CBC Arts*, May 13, 2003, accessed January 21, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/edmonton-to-sell-itself-as-festival-city-1.375316>.

first ever Indigenous-run international film and video festival.<sup>15</sup> This is also highlighted by Marjorie Beaucage in her contribution to the text *Transference, Tradition, Technology: Native New Media*.<sup>16</sup> Tom Delamere and Rick Rollins included the Edmonton Folk Music Festival in their study of tourism development and audience research.<sup>17</sup> David Gramit touches on the history of Alberta's first music festival, which took place in Edmonton in the early twentieth century, as part of his research on colonial narratives and the local music history of the city.<sup>18</sup> Brian Batchelor, a PhD student in Theatre and Performance Studies at York University, recently published an essay in *Theatre Research in Canada* that critiques the thirty-year history of the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Festival in relation to neo-liberalist policies and economic interests.<sup>19</sup>

Both Adams' article in the *Globe and Mail* and the scholarly contributions discussed here are significant to the selection of this case study. First, the current research on Edmonton's music and theatre festivals establish a frame of reference for this specific research, while also pointing towards the need for an investigation of the city's interdisciplinary, but primarily visual arts-focused events. Furthermore, Adams may be

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<sup>15</sup> Faye Ginsburg, "Embedded Aesthetics: Creating a Discursive Space for Indigenous Media," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3, *Further Inflections: Toward Ethnographies of the Future* (1994): 377.

<sup>16</sup> Marjorie Beaucage, "Aboriginal Voices," in *Transference, Tradition, Technology: Native New Media*, ed. Dana Claxton and Steve Loft (Banff: Walter Philips Gallery Editions, 2005), 147.

<sup>17</sup> Tom Delamere and Rick Rollins, "Kicking the Tires and Taking it for a Spin: Testing the Reliability and Validity of the Festival Social Impact Attitude Scale" (presentation at the Tenth Canadian Congress on Leisure Research, Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, May 22–25, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> David Gramit, "The Transnational History of Settler Colonialism and the Music of the Urban West: Resituating a Local Music History," *American Music* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 285.

<sup>19</sup> Brian Batchelor, "'This Beer Festival has a Theatre Problem!': The Evolution and Rebranding of the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Festival," *Theatre Research in Canada* 36, no. 1 (2015): 33–51.

correct in stating that Edmonton is “the new kid on the block” when it comes to *Nuit Blanche*-style events, but this description fails to recognize the city’s longstanding engagement with public arts festivals more generally. The city has hosted *The Works Art and Design Festival*, which distinguishes itself as North America’s largest free outdoor festival of art and design, since 1985.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, this thesis will examine two major public arts festivals that took place in Edmonton, Alberta, in 2015: its 30<sup>th</sup> annual *The Works Art and Design Festival* (June 19–July 1) and its inaugural *Nuit Blanche* (September 26–27). While *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche* vary greatly in structure, with the former happening over several days and the latter for only one night, both events showcase a range of curated projects by artists of local, regional, national and international reputation in order to temporarily “transform” Edmonton’s downtown core. Most importantly, *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche* share strong utopian themes of community engagement, and a reimagining of ordinary public spaces as free sites of exchange, where citizens become cultural producers themselves, rather than complacent spectators. By examining a large urban centre that offers an older, well-established festival format along with the increasingly popular model being adopted across Canada in the form of local *Nuits Blanches*, this study of two Edmonton festivals contributes to a greater understanding of public arts events taking place in the Canadian prairies, a subject which remains largely unexplored in this national discourse.

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<sup>20</sup> “Festival Info,” *The Works Art and Design Festival*, accessed January 21, 2017, <http://www.theworks.ab.ca/festival-info/>.

## 1.2 Theories of Cultural Imagination and Emancipation

In *The Emancipated Spectator*, French philosopher Jacques Rancière questions the theoretical and political implications of the term “spectator” in contemporary discourses on visual art, film, and theatre. He argues that the central problem with much of the literature surrounding public spectacle is that it relies on an outmoded structural opposition between passivity and activity. Rancière claims that, while such concepts appear to be diametrically opposed, they mask a shared function as unilateral forms of communication, which undermine the creative capacity of audiences.<sup>21</sup> He asserts that such binaries are “embodied allegories of inequality”<sup>22</sup> that maintain their power through their “distribution of the position and capacities and incapacities attached to these positions.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, whether the debate concerns either the inevitable passivity of the viewer or their liberation through participation, the “problem” of spectatorship always appears to be remedied through the intervention of a specific artist or institution whose status is elevated by their ability to bridge those who are knowledgeable with those who are not.<sup>24</sup>

Rancière takes the theatre as an example of how dominant systems of viewing have traditionally relied upon “the affirmation of a communitarian essence,”<sup>25</sup> where institutions are empowered through the neo-liberalist myth of their ability to bring together disparate individuals, transforming them into a cohesive, and most importantly, manageable whole. While Rancière does not deny the possibility for spectators to

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<sup>21</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 13.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 11–12.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

achieve emancipation, he believes, instead, that such emancipation depends on an understanding that “the collective power of spectators does not stem from the fact that they are members of a collective body or from some specific form of interactivity,” but rather that they are subjects “plotting their own paths in the forest of things, acts, and signs that confront or surround them.”<sup>26</sup> It is this statement by Rancière that serves as the theoretical starting point for an investigation of how spectatorship is addressed in Edmonton’s *The Works Arts and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche*.

Rancière’s concept of spectatorship calls attention to the equal capacity of any individual at any time to participate if they choose to do so, and underlines the ways in which much of the discourse concerning the passivity of the spectator underestimates the potential of individuals and makes broad generalizations about their level of engagement. This is perhaps a more productive way of theorizing about festivals, because it does not depend upon a debate concerning unilateral transmissions of knowledge. Ultimately, Rancière believes that the value of an individual’s decision to participate in an event depends on understanding “the power each of them as to translate what [they] perceive in [their] own way, to link it to the intellectual adventure that makes [them] similar to all the rest in as much as this adventure is not like any other.”<sup>27</sup>

Following this definition of spectatorship proposed by Rancière, this thesis will examine how these festivals recognize the creative and interpretive capacities of their spectators by inviting them to engage with art in new ways and everyday spaces. This thesis will primarily engage in a discourse analysis of *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche* in order to understand how spectators are addressed through

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 16–17.

the festivals' promotional materials, exhibition programming, and media coverage. It explores the strategies of engagement common to both festivals, and how these strategies offer meaningful connections with audiences, while also respecting the kind of emancipation envisioned by Rancière. Furthermore, it will also consider how these festivals construct a specific image of community for Edmonton in the context of scholars and curators whose work focuses on issues of viewership, place, and spectacle.

It is crucial to clarify that this thesis does not attempt to prove that these festivals, or civic spectacles in general, are by default more interactive, inclusive, or participatory than traditional art galleries and institutions. This would be detrimental to this analysis, because the success of both festivals' exhibition programming relies on a collaborative effort between Edmonton's various arts organizations and galleries, and a combination of public and corporate funding. The intention, therefore, is not to position the festival as a superior curatorial model to the more traditional art gallery. To imply that *The Works Art and Design Festival* or *Nuit Blanche* stand in opposition to the city's well established institutions would be to reinforce the kind of binary thinking that Rancière so strongly objects to in his introduction to *The Emancipated Spectator*. Rather, this text is central to a theoretical exploration of these festivals because it suggests a method for resisting the tendency to assume that one curatorial strategy is more passive or active than another.

In addition to Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator*, this thesis was largely influenced by Alan Blum's *The Imaginative Structure of the City*. Drawing on the work of Rancière, among others, Blum's text explores how we collectively engage with cities, both literally and metaphorically. What is most significant about Blum's work is that it does not seek to affirm or discount the profusion of interpretations that exist about cities.

Instead, Blum defines the city as “a collective force that fertilizes a range of encounters over questions connected to the uses of particular sites and the part these usages play in its everyday life.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, the city comes into being or is distinguished through our collective engagement in determining what it is or what it is not, a process that the author identifies as “courses of problem-solving.”<sup>29</sup> Like Rancière, Blum’s work is concerned with uncovering and questioning the ways in which these theories and interpretations about the city constitute the very discourse that surrounds the city as an object of study itself. Blum’s work, and its relation to Rancière’s theories, is explored in greater detail in Chapter Three and Chapter Four of this thesis.

Finally, it would be difficult to engage with a discourse on place, community, and the signifying power of the city without acknowledging the work of Benedict Anderson. In his seminal text, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Anderson argues that communities “are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”<sup>30</sup> He supports this theory with an analysis of what he believes to be the two most important and wide spread forms of community imaginings that have flourished since the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper.<sup>31</sup> For Anderson, both reinforce “the remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations.”<sup>32</sup> To clarify, Anderson’s assertion that communities are idealized through the circulation and

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<sup>28</sup> Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 14.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>30</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London and New York: 2006), 6.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

consumption of fictional texts is similar to Rancière's criticism of earlier theories on spectatorship, as both suggest that the imagining of a malleable communal body has traditionally served to reaffirm the status of governing institutions. Although Anderson's thinking is not as central a component as Rancière's and Blum's to the argument in this thesis, his theory of "imagined communities" has nonetheless been influential to an informed investigation of *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche*.

### **1.3 "Canada's Festival City": Branding the City and Edmonton's Civic Spectacles**

There are a number of issues that must be addressed in a thesis that analyzes public arts festivals, particularly within a Canadian context. Although these issues remain beyond the scope of this study of *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, it would be naïve to not address the problematic nature of civic spectacles more generally. These festivals are often driven by overarching narratives of inclusion and accessibility, and it is crucial to examine how strategies of inclusion aimed at specific populations, both local and tourist, might also exclude, displace, or prohibit other audiences from participating in the process. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize from the outset the ways in which the concept of urban promotion or "branding" the city is inextricably linked to such festivals, and how this association also points to very real concerns related to gentrification and marginalization.

In the case of Edmonton, Alberta, the controversies surrounding image construction and place-making are familiar concepts. This is succinctly summarized in an article by Nathan Bunio and Elvin Wyly, entitled "Championing the City Motto: An Analysis of Edmonton's Un/Official Slogan." Taking Edmonton as their case study, the authors

examine the growing trend in Canadian cities to develop urban slogans and brands in an attempt “to represent something that is unique to that city, to differentiate that city from others, and to attract attention.”<sup>33</sup> While their study is concerned primarily with the adoption and use of the slogan “City of Champions,” the authors acknowledge that the city has had a fairly lengthy list of both official and unofficial nicknames throughout its history, including “Gateway to the North,” “Gritty City,” and most important to the context of this thesis, the “Festival City” of Canada.<sup>34</sup> This use of both official and unofficial brand names to describe Alberta’s capital city informs this consideration of how very specific identities are fabricated by civic administration through the development and implementation of public programs. Most importantly, it leads this discussion about the tensions that arise in this process of identification and image construction.

Perhaps one of the earliest, and most widely cited, discussions on the relationship between cities and branding is David Harvey’s article “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism,” published in 1985. Harvey, known for his work on geography through a Marxist lens, cites what he believes to be a major shift in the approach to urban development in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He argues that, since the 1970s, civic economies have turned from a largely “managerial” approach to governance to “entrepreneurial” strategies.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Nathan Bunio and Elvin Wyly, “Championing the City Motto: An Analysis of Edmonton’s Un/Official Slogan,” *The Geographical Bulletin* 55 (2014): 82.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid* 91–93.

<sup>35</sup> David Harvey, “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban governance in Late Capitalism,” *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 71, no. 1, *The Roots of Geographical Change: 1973 to the Present* (1989): 3–7.

“The new urban entrepreneurialism,” Harvey explains, “typically rests... on a public-private partnership focusing on investment and economic development with the speculative construction of place rather than the amelioration of conditions within a particular territory as its immediate (though by no means exclusive) political and economic goal.”<sup>36</sup> According to Harvey, one of the main characteristics of this entrepreneurial approach to managing cities is the focus on place-making projects that attempt to construct or improve the particular image of a city. He cites examples such as “the construction of cultural, retail, entertainment and office centres” that “cast a seemingly beneficial shadow over the whole metropolitan region.”<sup>37</sup> While these initiatives are generally perceived as beneficial to a city’s population, Harvey asserts that such “place-specific projects” tend to deflect attention and resources away from the larger social and economic concerns of that area.<sup>38</sup>

A more recent example of the discourse on urbanization, economics, and their influence on arts and cultural programming is the American economist and social scientist Richard Florida’s *The Rise of the Creative Class*. In this case, Florida assembled empirical data on numerous post-industrial cities in the United States in order to argue that the future economic growth of these urban centres relies on their ability to successfully tap into the potential of their “Creative Class.”<sup>39</sup> This creative class, as it is defined by Florida, is an emergent class comprised of individuals employed in a range of knowledge-specific careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, architecture, design, and education, as well as those working in the arts, music, and

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 8.

entertainment industries.<sup>40</sup> On the peripheries of this Creative Class are “creative professionals” working in business, law, and health care.<sup>41</sup> According to Florida, it is this particular demographic that will ensure stable economic growth through its apparent qualities of individuality and self-expression, as well as its tendency to be dominated by individuals with higher levels of education and specialized knowledge.<sup>42</sup>

Florida’s work is relevant to this particular discussion of brand-building in the case of Edmonton because of its emphasis on the importance of place in relation to this so-called creative class. For example, Florida argues that in order to improve their overall economic situations, cities must market themselves as desirable to their creative classes. He states that “With the demise of company-dominated life, a new kind of pecking order has developed around places” because they function as “an important source of status.”<sup>43</sup> The author then goes on to discuss the many factors that contribute to the “quality of place,”<sup>44</sup> including the built and natural environments of cities, the diversity of their populations, and the “vibrancy” of their arts and street culture.<sup>45</sup> According to Florida, it is these characteristics, which distinguish certain cities as thriving and attractive to this specific demographic, that he believes will yield “creative economic outcomes in the form of new ideas, new high-tech businesses and regional growth.”<sup>46</sup>

*The Rise of the Creative Class* has been the subject of a considerable criticism since its publication in 2002, a fact that Florida acknowledges in the introduction to his

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 230.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 231.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 231–232.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 244.

subsequent publication *Cities and the Creative Class*.<sup>47</sup> Jamie Peck, Professor of Geography at UBC, is among those who have offered a critique of Florida's utopian theories. In the article "Struggling with the Creative Class," Peck describes Florida's writing as a mixture of "cosmopolitan elitism and pop universalism,"<sup>48</sup> among other things. Peck argues that the idea of the creative city proposed by Florida is among the strategies of urban policy that "work quietly with the grain of extant 'neoliberal' development agendas, framed around interurban competition, gentrification, middle-class consumption, and place-marketing. . . in which the arrival of the Creative Age takes the form of an unstoppable social revolution."<sup>49</sup> Peck's criticism is significant to an analysis of public arts festivals in Edmonton because it underlines the problems with the increasing trend towards incorporating what he refers to as "the creative-cities script"<sup>50</sup> that, too often, risks "indulging selective forms of consumption and for a privileged class of consumers."<sup>51</sup>

The relationship between arts and entrepreneurialism in urban promotion is also addressed in Sarah Banet-Weiser's essay "Convergence on the Street: Rethinking the Authentic/Commercial Binary." Banet-Weiser notes that since the late 1990s, both the United Kingdom and the United States "witnessed a more privatized, corporate-led movement in the arts and culture."<sup>52</sup> Using street art as her case study, she defines this transition as "convergence culture," that she describes as "part of a broad process

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005) 2.

<sup>48</sup> Jamie Peck, "Struggling with the Creative Class," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, no. 4 (December 2005): 741.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 742.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 764.

<sup>52</sup> Sarah Banet-Weisner, "Convergence on the Street: Rethinking the Authentic/Commercial Binary," *Cultural Studies* 25, no.4-5 (2011):641.

mobilized by political, economic, cultural and historical transitions”<sup>53</sup> that merges entrepreneurship with arts and culture in global capitalism. Banet-Weiser draws on a number of theorists whose work concerns the branding of cities, including David Harvey, Richard Florida, and Miriam Greenberg to question the ways in which creativity matters to global capitalism. She states that “in many accounts, the economic role that commercial culture plays in convergences is downplayed, so that the relationship between creative practices and commercial culture is considered as a cooperation. . . in which some creative practices are obscured at the expense of others.”<sup>54</sup> Banet-Weiser is particularly critical of the economic structures proposed by theorists such as Florida, arguing that the marketing of a “creative class” leads to the erasure of “those who do not clearly fall into a definition of the ‘creative class’,” such as immigrant populations and the working class, and the “simultaneous privatization of traditional public resources and spaces that are authorized as part of the creative city.”<sup>55</sup>

It is clear that the politics of consumption and promotion pose a number of problems to civic spectacles. As evidenced in this literature review, there is a considerable amount of mistrust and skepticism for events that are marketed primarily toward the privileged spectator. It is also important to acknowledge that these events not only risk marginalizing audiences, but artists and cultural producers working within these systems as well. The concern for the negative effects on artists of the branding of a city through its arts and entertainment industries is explored in a recent essay entitled “Festivals, Artists and Entrepreneurialism: The Role of the Adelaide Fringe Festival.” Here, Jo

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 644.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 649.

Caust and Hilary Glow investigate the increasing trend towards “entrepreneurialism” in arts festivals.

According to Caust and Glow, the commercial implications of this word has led to mixed feelings about its use by arts organizations and funding agencies. The authors note that, while much of the academic scholarship regarding entrepreneurialism in public arts festivals is focused on the criticism of such events as marketable spectacles for cultural tourism, there has been little commentary on the meaning of this term to the artists themselves. The article includes an exhaustive review of literature concerning the rise of entrepreneurialism in the 1980s “as an antidote to the received rigidity and inefficiency of bureaucratic organizations [that] would facilitate new, more ‘organic’ and flexible workplaces and practices.”<sup>56</sup> It examines the ways in which notions of entrepreneurship have emerged in curatorial discourse and its assessment in both academic and mainstream media sources, concluding that the dominance of entrepreneurship in creative industries in the last two decades is underpinned by “the belief that these industries are the key new growth sector of the economy.”<sup>57</sup> This belief is problematic for Caust and Glow, as it encourages the implementation of policies in which funding and support for arts organizations “is based on the criterion that they can be considered a sound financial or social investment.”<sup>58</sup> They assert that, in order to resist the threat that these commercially-driven neo-liberal attitudes towards arts festivals impose, the concept of entrepreneurialism would have to shift from the generation of profit to “the

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<sup>56</sup> Jo Caust and Hilary Glow, “Festivals, Artists and Entrepreneurialism: The Role of the Adelaide Fringe Festival,” *International Journal of Event Management Research* 6, no. 2 (2011): 2.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

production and dissemination of symbolic goods.”<sup>59</sup>

This literature review underlines the need to recognize that, while public arts festivals function as sites for meaningful exchange between artists, institutions, and spectators, they must also be approached with an informed understanding of how they contribute to a particular construction of a city’s image, identity, and community. While there appears to be little media coverage that directly addresses these concerns in Edmonton’s first *Nuit Blanche* or the 30<sup>th</sup> annual *Works Art and Design Festival*, a concrete example can be found in the development and implementation of Saskatoon’s *Nuit Blanche*. In an open letter published in the *StarPhoenix* in 2015, Cree activist Leah Arcand criticized the event for what she describes as “the displacement, erasure, and gentrification of Indigenous people.”<sup>60</sup> She states that the festival, which was hosted in Saskatoon’s Riversdale neighbourhood, was attended by “people who come to 20<sup>th</sup> Street on Sundays to have expensive brunches and ethical coffee but have otherwise never been west of Idylwyld after sunset.”<sup>61</sup> The following year, Stephanie McKay reported in “Feast of Art: *Nuit Blanche* offers art based on food theme in new venue,” that the festival would be relocated to a “more neutral zone” in Victoria Park and River Landing for its third edition in 2016. According to McKay, the reason for the relocation was “in part a response to criticism *Nuit Blanche* faced in 2015 related to the gentrification of

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Leah Arcand, “Letter to the Editor: *Nuit Blanche* an exclusive event in Saskatoon,” *StarPhoenix*, September 29, 2015, accessed January 21, 2017, <http://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/letter-to-the-editor-nuit-blanche-an-exclusive-event-in-saskatoon>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Riversdale and perceived lack of aboriginal inclusion.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, the programming for *Nuit Blanche Saskatoon 2016* was shaped around the concept of “Creative Cuisine as an Agent of Change,”<sup>63</sup> and would feature work by Indigenous, Métis, and non-Indigenous artists.

Clearly, there is a level of vigilance required when it comes to engaging in any analysis of public arts festivals. The example above underlines the need to carefully question exactly what messages these civic spectacles are trying to convey, and to whom. However, it is important to acknowledge the fact that such issues remain beyond the scope of this thesis and that a further study of these two Edmonton festivals would need to go beyond the groundwork established here to question, on an even deeper level, exactly what kind of spectators these events are addressing through their programming and promotion. Potential future directions for such research are addressed in the conclusion to this study. However, as demonstrated in this discussion on urban promotion and the relationship of festivals to branding in a prairie context, this thesis is guided by scholars and curators whose work investigates issues of place, community, and audiences. The theoretical framework discussed in this introduction is only a fragment of the literature that was included as part of this thesis research. Instead, the literature that was essential to this analysis is included in each chapter according to prominent questions or themes that emerged in these chapters.

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<sup>62</sup> Stephanie McKay, “Feast of Art: Nuit Blanche offers art based on food theme in new venue,” *StarPhoenix*, September 29, 2016, accessed January 21, 2017, <http://thestarphoenix.com/entertainment/local-arts/feast-of-art-nuit-blanche-offers-art-based-on-food-theme-in-new-venue>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

#### **1.4 Collection and Circulation: Parameters of the Case Study**

A brief explanation of the structure of this thesis and its contents will conclude this introduction. The aim of this first chapter is to clarify how and why this case study was chosen, and to establish the theoretical framework that will be used throughout the succeeding chapters. Chapter Two provides an overview of the methods applied to this study, while also emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis research. Most importantly, this second chapter will discuss the influence of Mieke Bal's *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, and why her approach to cultural analysis is fundamental to a reading of these two festivals. Chapter Three explores themes of community and collectivity through an investigation of prominent works located at the main grounds of the festivals: Susanna Barlow's *Potato Project* (2015) at *The Works Art and Design Festival* and Yoko Ono's *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* (2015) at *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. Chapter Four shifts the focus from ideas of collective engagement in order to discuss the other, but equally significant, characteristic shared by these civic spectacles: circulation. The fourth chapter, therefore, examines how these festivals distribute images, objects, and even people across multiple sites. It concentrates primarily on the different strategies used for the purposes of circulation, including maps and mobile apps. Chapter Five concludes with final thoughts about this case study and suggests further directions for this research.

## **CHAPTER 2: Travelling Through “The Forest of Things, Acts, and Signs”: A Methodological Approach to *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche***

This thesis is informed by cultural analysis as it is defined by cultural theorist Mieke Bal in *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*. There are a number of significant challenges that arise in a case study of two of Edmonton’s largest public arts festivals. These events not only vary greatly from each other in terms of logistics and design, but will inevitably vary from year to year in terms of their content and programming. Whereas the older and well-established of the two events, *The Works Art and Design Festival*, runs annually over a nearly two-week period and has a longstanding history in Edmonton, *Nuit Blanche* was at the time of its inception an entirely new event for Alberta’s capital city and followed a one-night only format, with the exception of a limited selection of works that were extended for the Friday evening and Sunday afternoon of the same weekend.<sup>64</sup> With the numerous differences between the two events, it is inevitable that a fixed methodology for reading both events would yield limited results. A more organic approach to understanding this case study is required, one that allows for a dialogue to be formed between the two festivals, while also recognizing the events as inherently unique and specific to a particular space and time. For this reason, this thesis begins its analysis of *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* by identifying the two most fundamental characteristics shared by these festivals: collection and circulation. The analysis that follows takes these

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<sup>64</sup> While most of the programming was scheduled for one night only, between the hours of 7:00pm and 4:00am, three exhibits were extended for the weekend. This included a preview of Amelia Scott and Joel Adria’s *Flora: Digital Greenhouse* and Kelly Mark’s video installation *108 Leyton Ave.* on the Friday evening immediately preceding the event. Yoko Ono’s *Wish Trees* were also held over for a few hours the following Sunday as part of Alberta Culture Days. See “Alberta Culture Days,” *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, accessed January 21, 2017, <http://2015.nuitblancheedmonton.ca/alberta-culture-days/>.

two concepts as a starting point for understanding how both festivals depend on systems of collection and circulation, and how these themes speak further to issues of space and spectatorship.

In *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*, Mieke Bal assesses the effectiveness of traditional disciplinary methodology when reading and interpreting cultural objects. Unsatisfied with the rigidity of disciplinary practice, Bal argues that the reliance on any one disciplinary-specific method often constrains the potential of analysis, leading researchers to sweeping generalizations that reduce images and texts to mere examples in an argument.<sup>65</sup> To avoid what she perceives as the shortcomings of conventional methodological practice, the author proposes the use of an interdisciplinary approach to cultural analysis, so that concepts and theories can “travel” between disciplines in order to establish what she defines as a “methodological common ground.”<sup>66</sup> By embracing the challenges of disciplinary crossover, the establishment of this common ground is the most appropriate means of engaging with the interdisciplinary qualities of *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. For this reason, Bal’s cultural analysis will inform the overarching methodological framework of this thesis research, which draws upon a combination of discourse analysis, ethnography, and phenomenology as it is applied in both of the disciplines of visual art and film.

According to Bal, meaningful analysis should begin with a concept. The author demonstrates this argument by selecting the term “subject” as a concept that holds many different meanings among philosophers, art historians, psychoanalytic critics, and

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<sup>65</sup> Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 45.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

architectural historians. For Bal, this indicates the problem with disciplinary methodologies because, when confined, they hinder an analyst's ability to consider what such terms might mean beyond their own field of expertise.<sup>67</sup> Rather than beginning with a specific method or theory, starting with a concept offers the potential for that concept to travel beyond a single discipline to become a site for the tentative exchange of ideas, debates, and interpretations. This may include several interpretive methods to find not a correct, but meaningful use.<sup>68</sup> As a result, cultural analysis opens up a possibility to employ multiple ways of reading that requires intersubjectivity capable of "fundamentally changing the way we "think" methodology within the different disciplines."<sup>69</sup>

Since this thesis is primarily concerned with a reading of *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* in the context of Rancière's theories on spectatorship, it is necessary to examine the discursive model of the public arts festival itself. In *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*, Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy define discourse analysis generally as "an interrelated set of texts and the practises of their production, dissemination, and reception that brings an object into being."<sup>70</sup> Gillian Rose offers further clarification of the way that discourses function within the production and dissemination of artwork in her publication *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*. She explains that a discourse "becomes not certain kinds of visual images but the knowledges, institutions,

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>70</sup> Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy, *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002), 3.

subjects that work to define certain images as art”<sup>71</sup> which are articulated through “all sorts of visual and verbal images and texts, specialised or not, and also through the practices that those languages permit.”<sup>72</sup>

Rose’s introductory text to visual methodologies also emphasizes the major influence of Michel Foucault on this particular methodology, reminding her audience that much of the work in contemporary discourse analysis owes an “explicit allegiance to Foucauldian arguments.”<sup>73</sup> In curatorial studies, this is evident in the proliferation of texts that adopt Foucault’s argument that power is not something that is simply possessed, but is, in fact, something that is exercised and produced through strategic constructions of knowledge.<sup>74</sup> Two key examples to understanding the direct impact that Foucauldian analysis has had on contemporary curatorial pedagogy are Eilean Hooper-Greenhill’s *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* and Tony Bennett’s *The Birth of the Museum*. In the former, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill argues that museums are structured in a way that conceals “the production of knowledge through the compilation of catalogues, inventories, and installations”<sup>75</sup> in order to train citizens to become docile consumers. The latter text has become widely influential, due to Bennett’s use of Foucauldian theory in illustrating what he defines as the “exhibitionary complex,”<sup>76</sup> a form of institutional conditioning that persuades visitors to internalize the public gaze “as a principle of self-surveillance

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<sup>71</sup> Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012), 190.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 191.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 195.

<sup>74</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 26–27.

<sup>75</sup> Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 190.

<sup>76</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 66.

and, hence, self-regulation.”<sup>77</sup>

The use of discourse analysis in this thesis research is further enriched by Foucault’s theory of heterotopias, or what he describes as “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites . . . that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.”<sup>78</sup> Heterotopias, like the public festival, are both concrete and transitory. Unlike utopias, which Foucault argues are illusory and can never be realized, they are capable of inserting fantasy into the spaces of the everyday, acting as mirrors that offer reflections of a society’s potential.<sup>79</sup> These applications of Foucault’s work as a methodology not only provides the groundwork required to examine how both of the public arts festivals taking place in Edmonton are constructed as accessible and democratic forms of exhibition design, but how these constructions may be reaffirmed or challenged by critical discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis, therefore, will inform an investigation of material examples that might speak to the broader theoretical questions voiced by Rancière in *The Emancipated Spectator*. It will provide a method for analyzing how these festivals configure social relationships not only through the exhibition of artists’ work, but also through related advertising materials, newspapers, and websites in order to further understand how these large-scale public events are constructed for both local and tourist audiences. How does this panoply of objects, texts, and spaces speak to the interpretive equality that Rancière

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>78</sup> Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring, 1986 [1984]): 24.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 3.

values in spectators?<sup>80</sup>

While its emphasis on identifying power relationships is central to understanding how *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* attempt to forge new relationships with and among their audiences, the application of discourse analysis requires the incorporation of scholarly work promoting a self-reflexive approach. This is due, in part, to a number of critiques of this particular method. For example, in their assessment of discourse analysis, Jan Blommaert and Chris Bulcaen note the “general fuzziness”<sup>81</sup> of how this particular methodology actually functions, and whether that inevitably leads to analysts using texts to force their own ideologies upon the reader.<sup>82</sup> Rosalind Gill also recognizes this problem, but does not see it as an impediment to using this methodology. Instead, Gill reinforces the idea that discourse analysis must be put into practice in order to develop, and that the analyst must adopt a self-reflexive process that allows “the interrogation of [the analyst’s] own assumptions and the ways in which [they] make sense of things.”<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, these concerns for reflexivity are present in an earlier formulation of Bal’s cultural analysis in *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis*. Here, Bal reminds her readers that, when a critic begins to formulate a theory surrounding discourse, they are simultaneously exposing their own conclusions as a discourse itself. As the author explains, this means that the interpreter must recognize and reflect upon the way that they are always “semantically situated within that

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<sup>80</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 13.

<sup>81</sup> Jan Blommaert and Chris Bulcaen, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 29 (2000): 455.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Rosalind Gill, “Discourse Analysis: Practical Implementations,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences*, ed. John T. E. Richardson (Leicester: British Psychological Society, 1996), 145.

argument.”<sup>84</sup>

These criticisms not only underline the importance of a self-reflexive approach to discourse analysis, but emphasise the need for additional methods in an interdisciplinary analysis of both *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. This method, therefore, is also informed by affect theory and ethnography as they pertain to the interpretation of signs and positionality, making Gilles Deleuze’s concept of “encountered signs”<sup>85</sup> central for understanding the significance of a self-reflexive study of spectatorship within these festivals. Not only does a consideration of the “encountered sign”<sup>86</sup> help to foreground a discussion of a range of ethnographical and phenomenological approaches in both visual art and film studies, but it will also illuminate a parallel between the author’s formation of learning as “an apprenticeship of signs”<sup>87</sup> and Rancière’s insistence on the interpretive capacity inherent to all spectators.

In *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze examines the organization and experience of signs through the work of French novelist Marcel Proust. Analyzing Proust’s most famous work, *In Search of Lost Time*, Deleuze argues that “to learn is first of all to consider a substance, an object, a being as if it emitted signs to be deciphered, interpreted.”<sup>88</sup> For Deleuze, the process of learning is not simply a unilateral transmission of knowledge driven by rational thought.<sup>89</sup> Rather, the author asserts that the desire to learn originates from an intense sensory and psychological encounter with signs, which then compels

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<sup>84</sup> Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 7.

<sup>85</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 16.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

individuals to seek truth through their subsequent interpretation of these experiences.<sup>90</sup> Thus, Deleuze's text calls attention to the importance of sensory experiences in the learning process, which he believes function as "the accident of the encounter that guarantees the necessity of what is thought."<sup>91</sup>

For Deleuze, the relationship between the experience of signs, and the resulting search for their meaning, is most apparent in the fields of art and literature, or what he describes as "the ultimate world of signs."<sup>92</sup> This is due to the ability of these disciplines to instill affective qualities into tangible objects, thereby illustrating what the author identifies as the power of signs to denote "an ideal essence that [is] incarnated to their material meaning."<sup>93</sup> It can be argued, then, that Deleuze's theorization of "encountered signs" will enrich an analysis of both *The Works Art and Design Festival and Nuit Blanche Edmonton* because of its attentiveness to affective experiences in the interpretation of signs. This is not only evident in the work of theorists who directly apply the concept of the "encountered sign" to the interpretation of images, but in many of the discourses on contemporary ethnography that emphasize the necessity of taking into account the role of sensory experience as part of the research process.

A strong argument for this use of affect as a methodological approach can be found in Jill Bennett's publication entitled *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*. Here, the author adopts Deleuzian theory in order to demonstrate what she believes to be "a genuinely interdisciplinary practice in which all manner of inquiries can,

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 3–4.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 14.

through their distinct formal means, advance the analysis of culture.”<sup>94</sup> Bennett provides a succinct summary of Deleuze’s theory of the “encountered sign” as it pertains to art, explaining that the strength of this theory lies in the parity between both the emotional responses to images and the interpretative strategies necessary to thinking and writing about visual art and film. For Bennett, Deleuze’s concept of signs is significant because it underlines that the reception of visual images and texts is “not driven by or enslaved by any particular understanding,” but is “always productive of ideas.”<sup>95</sup> Bennett’s work, therefore, not only provides an example of the direct application of Deleuze’s theory to the reading of images and objects within the discipline of visual art, but also reinforces the connection between this particular methodology and the larger theoretical framework of this thesis as it pertains to Rancière’s writing on institutionalized spectatorship and hierarchical approaches to education. This is because, like Rancière, Bennett’s work with Deleuzian theory emphasizes that the interpretation of signs and the production of meaning is a process that all individuals have an equal capacity to participate in.

Furthermore, the prevalence of the encountered sign in both Deleuze and Bennett parallels the recent turn to affect in Bal’s current work on installation art. In her most recent publication *Thinking in Film: The Politics of Video Installation According to Eija-Liisa Ahtila*, Bal examines the aesthetic and political potential of movement in contemporary video installation. Drawing on the theoretical work of French philosopher Henri Bergson, the author asserts that questioning “the different ways in which [images]

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<sup>94</sup> Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 153.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

move”<sup>96</sup> is central to the interpretation of gallery films and video installation, as these works are not only characterised by movement inherent to the physical medium of film itself, but in how they are experienced emotionally by spectators. It is this capacity to express a multiplicity of meanings concurrently through movement that transforms any video installation into what Bal describes as a “contact space.”<sup>97</sup> These “contact spaces,” she argues, serve as democratic interventions into ordinary public spaces, where spectators “can be together, learn new things that break with everyday routine, recognize and acknowledge the unreflective habits of others, and then talk on an equal footing.”<sup>98</sup> While Bal’s text is specifically concerned with the role of video installation in the setting of a traditional gallery space, it is worth considering this methodological approach within the context of those urban arts festivals, which incorporate interdisciplinary approaches to installation in reinforcing their overarching narratives of place, community, and inclusivity.

Finally, the theme of reflexivity that is shared among all these texts necessitates a discussion of ethnographic research and positionality as it pertains to this thesis. The majority of the data used for analysis was collected from observational research during site visits to *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. This makes a consideration of contemporary ethnographic research essential to this case study. While it is necessary to consider the researcher’s position before beginning this analysis, it is equally important to recognize the limitations of conducting observational research related to these specific events. In her recent publication entitled *Doing Sensory*

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<sup>96</sup> Mieke Bal, *Thinking in Film: The Politics of Video Installation According to Eija-Liisa Ahtila* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 5.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 7.

*Ethnography*, social anthropologist Sarah Pink provides an exhaustive overview of the history and current debates on ethnography. Recognizing the challenges that this method poses for both the students and the experts working in interdisciplinary studies, Pink challenges the concept of a “proper” approach to ethnography, explaining that such definitions overlook the real challenges that affect researchers. Instead, the author advocates for an approach that “does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but ... the negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced.”<sup>99</sup>

Pink’s approach not only stresses the need for self-reflexive research and positionality, but also further enriches an understanding of ethnographic practice by confronting some of the very real challenges that confront researchers. For example, Pink notes that, in many cases, there are time constraints that limit an individual’s ability to engage in field work over long periods of time, a characteristic of traditional disciplinary ethnography.<sup>100</sup> Thus, Pink’s understanding of ethnographic research as it is used in contemporary interdisciplinary fields of study is particularly relevant to an analysis of *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* from a spectator’s perspective, as both events are durational and occur for a limited number of hours or days, restricting the amount of time a researcher can invest in observational data collection.

This need for positionality and self-reflexivity is further discussed in an interview between film theorists Diane Burgess and Brendan Kredell, which is featured in this

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<sup>99</sup> Sarah Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, 2nd ed (London; Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2015), 5.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

same collection under the title “Positionality and Film Festival Research: A Conversation.” Here, Burgess and Kredell debate what they call the “insider/outsider binary”<sup>101</sup> that plagues many of the current debates on ethnographic research. The authors explain that ethnographic research has become so central to the study of film festivals that the “insider” voice is now recognized as a central trope in much of the discourse on these events.<sup>102</sup> Challenging this approach, Kredell reminds readers that, while programmers and curators typically have the intimate knowledge of the inner workings of festivals, they make up only a small percent of the individuals who engage with these events.<sup>103</sup> The authors then conclude their discussion by arguing that researchers must first “take into account how [their] own position within the field facilitates certain kinds of research projects while foreclosing on others.”<sup>104</sup>

The binary opposition between what Burgess and Kredell identify as festival “insiders” and audience “outsiders” is crucial to this methodological framework because, as a study that relies heavily on observations gathered from a spectator perspective, this thesis addresses the topic of Edmonton’s *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche* as they are experienced by the researcher. As such, this thesis inevitably forecloses on the possibility of providing the intimate knowledge of these events required to facilitate an in-depth discussion that might be illuminated by an “insider’s” perspective. This makes contemporary debates on ethnographic research by authors such as Burgess and Kredell invaluable in analyzing this case study, because it challenges

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<sup>101</sup> Diane Burgess and Brendan Kredell, “Positionality and Film Festival Research: A Conversation,” *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist (New York: Routledge, 2016), 159.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid* 159.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, 160–163.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid* 167.

traditional disciplinary models and helps to legitimize new directions for researching public arts festivals.<sup>105</sup>

The issues of self-reflexivity and positionality shared by this literature illustrate the need for an interdisciplinary methodological framework, such as the one demonstrated in Bal's cultural analysis. Bal contends that "if explicit, clear, and defined, [concepts] can help to articulate an understanding, convey an interpretation, check an imagination run wild, or enable a discussion on the basis of common terms and in the awareness of absences and exclusions. . . not as a clear-cut methodological legislation, but as a territory to be travelled."<sup>106</sup> Instead of trying to locate a "correct" methodology that can be applied to such distinct cultural events, this thesis will begin by identifying how the notion of the "collective" or the process of "circulation" inform a reading that is open to numerous possible dialogues informed by an exchange between critical discourse analysis, affect theory, and self-reflexive practices. This research will therefore take cultural analysis as its overarching methodology framework because of its potential to guide an interdisciplinary study of a topic that is, itself, both interdisciplinary and specific.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 23.

### CHAPTER 3: Collective Desire(s): Constructing an Image of Community through Yoko Ono's *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and Susanna Barlow's *Potato Project*

Make a wish.  
Write it down on a piece of paper.  
Fold it and tie it around a branch of a wish tree.  
Ask your friend to do the same.  
Keep wishing.  
Until the branches are covered with wishes.<sup>107</sup>

*Yoko Ono, Instructions for Wish Tree*

On the evening of September 26, 2015, an estimated 52,000 festival attendees flocked to Edmonton's downtown for the city's inaugural *Nuit Blanche*.<sup>108</sup> Much of the programming and visitor attractions, consisting of more than thirty exhibitions and projects, were within a short walking distance of Sir Winston Churchill Square, an expansive court in Edmonton's downtown bordered by restaurants and shops, as well as several of the city's key civic institutions: Art Gallery of Alberta, Winspear Centre, Citadel Theatre, Stanley A. Milner Library, and City Hall.<sup>109</sup> As the host site of numerous performances and public programs throughout the year, the location of the Square made it an ideal site for *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*'s main grounds. It was here, at the centre of this one-night only festival, that a temporary forest of trees was fashioned as part of the most recent installation of Yoko Ono's collaborative public artwork *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* (1996/2015). Only a few months earlier, the Square also served as the entry point and site of local artist Susanna Barlow's *Potato Project* (2015) at the 30th annual *Works Art and Design Festival*. This chapter will explore Ono's *Wish*

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<sup>107</sup> Yoko Ono, "Instructions for Wish Tree," *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, accessed January 18, 2017, <http://2015.nuitblancheedmonton.ca/programming/wish-tree-imagine-peace/>.

<sup>108</sup> *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, "A Round Up of Nuit Blanche Edmonton 2015" (annual report, Edmonton, 2016), 3.

<sup>109</sup> "Things to See and Do," *City of Edmonton*, accessed May 19, 2016, [http://www.edmonton.ca/attractions\\_events/churchill\\_square/things-to-see-do.aspx](http://www.edmonton.ca/attractions_events/churchill_square/things-to-see-do.aspx).

*Tree/Imagine Peace* and Barlow's *Potato Project* through shared themes of growth, utopia, and desire, and the ways in which the relationship of these works to this specific location in Edmonton speaks to larger discourses concerning public arts festivals and constructed concepts of audience and community.

This analysis begins with a description of both Ono's *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and Barlow's *Potato Project* in order to recognize how civic spectacles attempt to construct a sense of "togetherness" for public audiences. More specifically, this discussion will explore how each installation serves to align Edmonton with a particular community identity, whether it is through the city's inclusion in a world-wide collaborative project or by highlighting its regionally-specific heritage. It is important to clarify that this research does not attempt to argue that these works directly or effectively result in a stronger sense of community with their audiences. Rather, this chapter is concerned with how situating these works in the context of these civic spectacles conveys a very specific image of Edmonton to their audiences.

Although the study of these works within the context of their display at *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* and *The Works Art and Design Festival* is largely motivated by an interest in how public festivals promote narratives of inclusion through the arrangement of objects, images, texts—and even people—it is not sufficient to provide an investigation of these pieces from this single perspective. In other words, to simply suggest that Ono's *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and Barlow's *Potato Project* serve as a means for the city to impose an idyllic civic unity on festival audiences would be to reinforce the idea that spectator participation is always subject to the external forces of institutional desire, an idea problematized by Jacques Rancière in *The Emancipated Spectator*. While recognizing

the potential problems that come from a discussion of community in public arts festivals, this thesis research will consider the potential for the affective qualities of this concept to create meaningful connections within and beyond institutional discourses of communal spectatorship, and how desire circulates in both municipal and private imaginings of community.

Finally, as a tourist to the festival, it is crucial to ground my own experience of the work as a Deleuzian spectator. Following Deleuze's notion of the "encountered sign,"<sup>110</sup> discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, it is possible to suggest that the psychological and sensory experience of both Ono's *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and Barlow's *Potato Project* is central to an interpretation that goes beyond their use as reinforcements to civic pedagogy. For this reason, I have included observations gathered during the research phase of this thesis that reflect not only my observations of how audiences engaged with these works, but my own interaction with them as a participant in these festivals. This is further reflected upon in the following sections devoted to describing and analyzing each work individually.

### **3.1 Yoko Ono's *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* (1996/2015)**

As previously stated, the city of Edmonton's first-ever *Nuit Blanche* opened with a key work by New-York based artist Yoko Ono: *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* (1996/2015). The two-part installation, which was celebrated in the festival's promotional materials as the largest version of the work to date, involved the temporary installation of 121 individually-potted spruce, Amur cherry, and aspen trees arranged in a large cluster in

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<sup>110</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 16.

the centre of Sir Winston Churchill Square.<sup>111</sup> Visitors to the festival were invited to contribute to the project by stopping at a nearby pavilion, where they could record their own “wish” on one of the blank paper tags provided by volunteers and then attach it to any tree of their choosing. As the night progressed, the trees continued to accumulate more and more of the festival attendees’ “wishes,” which filled the available branches and gave what the artist has previously described as the appearance of “white flowers blossoming from afar.”<sup>112</sup> A series of coloured lights installed throughout the Square illuminated the wish trees, allowing participants the opportunity to stroll through the foliage throughout the evening and read the wishes and hopes left behind by others. The second component of the installation, a large reproduction of one of Ono’s billboards featuring the words “Imagine Peace” in black text on a white background, hung adjacent to the wish tree forest above the entrance to Edmonton City Hall.<sup>113</sup>

Both the wishes collected from the wish trees and the text-based billboard are rooted in two major projects from Ono’s oeuvre. This is evident in the *Imagine Peace* billboard that accompanies the wish tree forest because of its relation to the artist’s much earlier collaboration with husband John Lennon for their *War is Over!* (1969) billboard and

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<sup>111</sup> Fish Griwkowsky, “Nuit Blanche – massive art fest a creative party,” *Edmonton Journal*, September 22, 2015, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/local-arts/edmontons-nuit-blanche-a-gigantic-art-party-and-more>. Also see “Half-Lit Moon,” *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://2015.nuitblancheedmonton.ca/the-half-lit-moon/>.

<sup>112</sup> “Yoko Ono in Pasadena,” *Folio: The Publication of the Pasadena Arts Council* 3, no. 4 (July/August 2008): 1, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://pasadenaartscouncil.axsfestival.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/FOLIO-2008-July-August.pdf>.

<sup>113</sup> “Wish Tree/Imagine Peace,” *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://2015.nuitblancheedmonton.ca/programming/wish-tree-imagine-peace/>.

poster campaign.<sup>114</sup> The project took place in December, 1969, and involved the dissemination of large billboards, posters, placards, and newspaper advertisements bearing the text: “WAR IS OVER! IF YOU WANT IT. Happy Christmas from John and Yoko”<sup>115</sup> across several major metropolitan centres around the world.<sup>116</sup>

While Ono’s continued use of commercial advertising to communicate messages of peace and activism may be familiar, the connection to her use of text is also integral to an informed discussion of her wish trees at *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. This work is part of a much larger project by Ono known as the *Imagine Peace Tower* (2007), a site-specific architectural installation and memorial to Lennon, located on Viðey Island in Kollafjörður Bay near Reykjavík, Iceland.<sup>117</sup> In an interview available on the official website for the *Imagine Peace Tower*, Ono connects the project to her conceptual language-based work of the 1960s. She explains that the architectural component of the installation first appeared in her *Sales List* (1965),<sup>118</sup> in which Ono describes a prototype of the structure under the section “Architectural Works.”<sup>119</sup> The website notes that the artist later revised this entry for an exhibition at Lisson Gallery, London, in 1967:

#### LIGHT HOUSE

The light house is a phantom house that is built by sheer light.

You set up prisms at a certain time of day, under a certain evening light which goes through the prisms, the light house appears in the middle of the field like an

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Kevin Concannon, “War is Over!: John and Yoko’s Christmas Eve Happening, Tokyo, 1969,” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 17, 1960s Japan: Art Outside of the Box (December 2005): 73.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 73–74.

<sup>117</sup> “About Imagine Peace Tower,” *Imagine Peace Tower*, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://imaginepeacetower.com/light-house/>.

<sup>118</sup> “The Collection,” *Museum of Modern Art*, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://www.moma.org/collection/works/131389?locale=en>.

<sup>119</sup> Yoko Ono, “Imagine Peace Tower,” YouTube video, 0:00:28, posted September 12, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLTp11aWn-o>.

image, except that, with this image, you can actually go inside if you wanted to. The light house may not emerge every day, just as the sun doesn't shine every day.<sup>120</sup>

According to Ono, Lennon first expressed an interest in physically creating a structure, inspired by this excerpt, for his own garden in 1965.<sup>121</sup> However, the sculpture was not unveiled until October 9th, 2007, more than twenty years after Lennon's death and forty years since its original conception in *Sales List*.<sup>122</sup> The structure is modelled after a cylindrical wishing well, four metres in diameter and two metres high, that stands on a foundation constructed from locally-sourced hyalite, dolerite and basalt stone.<sup>123</sup> The words "Imagine Peace" are inscribed in twenty-four different languages on the white stone surface of the sculpture, which acts as a frame for a large column of light emanating from the centre and directed upwards into the sky.<sup>124</sup> This beam of light is composed of several smaller lights, powered by Iceland's geo-thermal energy grid, that join together to form a single column.<sup>125</sup> It is illuminated each night between October 9th and December 8th, as well as a few other select dates, including the winter solstice and the March equinox.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> This information was verified using two sources: "Light," *Imagine Peace Tower*, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://imaginepeacetower.com/light/>; and "Collection," Reykjavik Art Museum, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://safneign.listasafnreykjavikur.is/en/verk/H-130>.

<sup>121</sup> Yoko Ono, "Imagine Peace Tower," YouTube video, 0:07:27, posted September 12, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLTp11aWn-o>.

<sup>122</sup> "Lennon's Peace Imagine Peace Tower lights up Reykjavik," *CBC Arts*, October 10, 2007, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/lennon-s-imagine-peace-tower-lights-up-reykjavik-1.652927>.

<sup>123</sup> "Architecture," *Imagine Peace Tower*, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://imaginepeacetower.com/construction/>.

<sup>124</sup> "Collection," *Reykjavik Art Museum*.

<sup>125</sup> "Light," *Imagine Peace Tower*.

<sup>126</sup> "Imagine Peace Tower until 8 December," *Reykjavik Art Museum*, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://artmuseum.is/news/imagine-peace-tower-until-8-december>.

What is most interesting to this particular discussion is that the *Imagine Peace Tower* also serves as the repository for more than one million wishes collected during the various installations of *Wish Tree* at public art galleries worldwide since the 1990s.<sup>127</sup> In her interview with the *Edmonton Journal* as part of the lead up to the city's first *Nuit Blanche*, Ono explains that the wishes gathered from every exhibition of *Wish Tree* are later shipped to Iceland, where they are copied into digital form. The original tags bearing participants' handwritten wishes—approximately 10,000, in the case of *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*<sup>128</sup>—are then archived and stored beneath the *Imagine Peace Tower* in what the artist describes as a “museum.”<sup>129</sup> The wish trees vary in number and in species, so that, following the completion of the project, they will suit the host site's climate when planted in the community. Although the project description available on the *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* website does not specify where these 121 trees will be relocated, it does state that its wish trees will be planted in communities throughout the city.<sup>130</sup> In an e-mail correspondence with the director of this year's *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, it was confirmed that the decision not to specify where the trees would be planted was intentional, as the artist did not wish for the exact location of the wish trees to be known.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Street Scenes: Projects for DC, “Yoko Ono Presents “Imagine Peace” Billboard Project in Washington, DC and New York” (press release, Washington, 2009), accessed May 20, 2016,

<http://www.streetscenesdc.com/Street%20Scenes%20YO%20Press%20Release.pdf>.

<sup>128</sup> Ruth Burns, email message to the author, September 21, 2016.

<sup>129</sup> Fish Griwkowsky, “Yoko's Nuit Blanche art includes Wish Tree Forest,” *Edmonton Journal*, September 21, 2015, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/local-arts/yoko-onos-nuit-blanche-art-includes-wish-tree-forest>.

<sup>130</sup> “Wish Tree/Imagine Peace,” *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*.

<sup>131</sup> Burns, email message to the author, September 21, 2016.

It is this connection between the individual installation of *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and its reference to the much larger *Imagine Peace Tower* project that will be most important to this discussion on community. To clarify, it will examine how locality, evident in the site-specificity of *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace*, and the overarching concern for a unified, global community, represented here by the archiving of wishes at the *Imagine Peace Tower*, work together to reorganize public space. This reorganization of space, ultimately, reveals a specific narrative of community desired and constructed by *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. Here, the image of community proposed by Ono, and the one desired by this specific festival, is entirely imagined. It moves from one civic spectacle to another, as evidenced in both its recent appearance at *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* and its earlier presentation at the third annual *Scotiabank Nuit Blanche Toronto*.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, the homogenised approach to community in *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace*, combined with its reference to two highly recognized names in global popular culture, aligns Edmonton with a fictional cosmopolitanism, or what Benedict Anderson has famously articulated as “an imagined community,”<sup>133</sup> while having very little relationship with the actual city itself. This is made even more apparent when discussed in contrast to Barlow’s installation at the *Works Art and Design Festival* three months earlier, which also emphasizes locality and coheres to its own festival’s celebration of local arts and culture.

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<sup>132</sup> “Yoko Ono’s ‘Imagine Peace’ slated for Nuit Blanche,” *Toronto Star*, July 9, 2008, accessed May 20, 2016, [https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/2008/07/09/yoko\\_onos\\_imagine\\_peace\\_slated\\_for\\_nuit\\_blanche.html](https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/2008/07/09/yoko_onos_imagine_peace_slated_for_nuit_blanche.html).

<sup>133</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London and New York: 2006), 6.

### 3.2 Susanna Barlow's *Potato Project* (2015)

Just three months prior to its first *Nuit Blanche Event*, Edmonton celebrated its 30th annual *Works Art and Design Festival*, an event that takes place at the beginning of the summer and spans over one square kilometre of the city's downtown core. Like *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, the *Works Art and Design Festival* uses Sir Winston Churchill Square as its main headquarters, and included a number of temporary exhibits, performances, and workshops. However, among the many activities that took place at the Square as part of the festival in 2015, one work in particular emerged as the starting point, both physically and thematically, for the entire event: local artist Susanna Barlow's *Potato Project* (2015). Like the installation of Ono's *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* at *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, it is worth considering how the themes of growth that inform Barlow's *Potato Project* might also speak to the ways in which space and audiences and community are constructed in public arts festivals.

As one of two projects by Barlow featured at the 2015 *Works Art and Design Festival*, the *Potato Project* occupied a large section of 102A Avenue, directly in front of the South entrance to City Hall.<sup>134</sup> The installation was quite simple in its design: several massive pots containing potato plants were placed on the closed-off street space, intermingled with oversized, potato-shaped bean bag chairs. It is here that personal, self-reflexive observation of the work and the ways in which festival audiences engaged with it becomes crucial to understanding its significance. The chairs allowed seating space for visitors, who could be seen either lounging by themselves or socializing with others as they took in the sights and sounds of the festival. It also served as a resting place for

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<sup>134</sup> The Works International Visual Arts Society, "The Works Art and Design Festival Guide" (Edmonton, 2015), 3.

families visiting City Hall's South Plaza, which includes a large water feature at its entrance that doubles as a wading pool for the summer months and a public skating rink during the winter. For this reason, the work was highly successful in its capacity to integrate into its surrounding space in a productive way by adapting to the everyday function of the site as a social space. Ultimately, *Potato Project* gains meaning not through the construction of an identifiable image of community, but through its use as a resting point. It provides respite for the numerous daily activities that happen here throughout the summer months, well before and long after the festival takes place.<sup>135</sup>

The *Potato Project* was the result of collaboration between the artist, festival staff, and Edmonton Potato Growers Limited, who donated the seed potatoes and provided a resource for the proper care of the plants. According to an interview with Barlow featured on the *Works Art and Design Festival's* video channel, "Eye on the Square," the potatoes were planted in late April in order to ensure that there would be substantial plants to display for the summer.<sup>136</sup> During this interview, the artist also attributed the inspiration of the project to a specific time in the city's history, which she had discovered while looking through old family photographs:

It actually all started this past Christmas . . . my family was looking through old photos. I saw a photo of my grandmother's neighbourhood from the 1960s, and every front lawn – it had a potato garden in its front lawn, and no grass seed. It just left a drawing visual impression on me, because it was an entirely different urban landscape.... the reason why people were doing this was because potatoes

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<sup>135</sup> "Edmonton City Hall: A Self-Guided Tour," *City of Edmonton*, accessed May 20, 2016, [http://www.edmonton.ca/attractions\\_events/documents/PDF/CityHallSelfGuidedTourBrochure.pdf](http://www.edmonton.ca/attractions_events/documents/PDF/CityHallSelfGuidedTourBrochure.pdf).

<sup>136</sup> Susanna Barlow, "Susanna Barlow - The Potato Project - Works Art and Design Festival 2015 - Eye On the Square," YouTube video, 0:01:35, posted by "The Works Art and Design Festival," June 23, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHo39JGbZPc>.

infused soil with nitrogen, which makes a really nutrient-rich beginning to a plot of land.<sup>137</sup>

Upon further research and conversations with members of her family, Barlow discovered that this particular form of urban agriculture had been common practice throughout the city of Edmonton during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>138</sup> As she explains, the motivation for planting potatoes instead of grass seed is due to the ability for potato plants to infuse soil with nitrogen, thereby allowing for a more nutrient-rich start to a garden or lawn. It is this concept of infusing soil with essential nutrients that would later inform the *Potato Project* at the *Works Art and Design Festival*. Barlow notes that, while the act of planting potato gardens in favour of lawns is less commonly practiced in most neighbourhoods in Edmonton today, she sees this history as a metaphor for her installation and the entire festival more generally. She states that: “people don’t commonly practice this anymore, but I’m trying to appropriate planting a potato garden in the front lawn as a ritual of renewal, or preparing Edmonton for its future growth. So I see this geographic site [Edmonton City Hall] as the front lawn of Edmonton in a sense.”<sup>139</sup>

This notion of community growth is further emphasized in the dissemination of Barlow’s *Potato Project* following the closing of the *Works Art and Design Festival*. The festival closed on July 1, 2015, well before the potato plants would be ready for harvest, and so a subsequent “Potato Harvest Party” was hosted by The Works International

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 0:00:39.

<sup>138</sup> Susanna Barlow, email to the artist.

<sup>139</sup> Barlow, “Susanna Barlow - The Potato Project,” 0:01:15.

Visual Arts Society the following October.<sup>140</sup> The free public event included a variety of outdoor lawn games and—of course—potato-based snacks prepared by The Works staff and the local business Massimos Cucina Italiana.<sup>141</sup> Those attending the party were invited to help harvest the remaining three to four potato plots, and participated in a cider-pressing workshop organized by Operation Fruit Rescue Edmonton, a non-profit organization within the city that promotes sustainable approaches to locally-sourced food and urban agriculture.<sup>142</sup> The now nutrient-rich soil used for the *Potato Project* was then distributed to the public by giving away free “to-go bags”<sup>143</sup> to anyone attending the event to use in their own gardening projects.<sup>144</sup> This, for Barlow, was the final stage in what she describes as a socially engaged practice designed to subvert the role of the artist and foster a stronger sense of community within the city. As she explains:

I was really encouraged by the way that this brought together a really diverse group of industries, and how people really rallied around this idea. Throughout the whole process, I am looking for ways to kind of displace my own authorship over the project and give it to Edmonton, and have the public really take ownership over it.<sup>145</sup>

Barlow’s installation at the *Works Art and Design Festival* is characterized by its local reach, as opposed to the global scale of the wishes collected from Ono’s *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace at Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. Still, the works both share a common desire for a unified sense of community. This is not only evident in peoples’ direct

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<sup>140</sup> The Works International Visual Arts Society, “The Works Potato Project Autumn Harvest Party” (flyer, Edmonton, 2015).

<sup>141</sup> Barlow, email to the artist, June 26, 2016.

<sup>142</sup> This information was verified in an email to the artist on June 26, 2016. For further information on Operation Fruit Rescue Edmonton’s mission statement and programs, see “About Us,” *Operation Fruit Rescue Edmonton*, accessed June 26, 2016, <http://operationfruitrescue.org/about/>.

<sup>143</sup> Barlow, “Susanna Barlow - The Potato Project,” 0:02:24.

<sup>144</sup> “About Us,” *Operation Fruit Rescue Edmonton*.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

interaction with the work, but also in the ways in which both works contribute to the festival as a whole. Most importantly, by occupying the same geographic area of the city, the similarity of themes in the work of Ono and Barlow underline the very constructed nature of concepts such as “community” and “togetherness” that are of central importance to these civic spectacles. It is now necessary to consider how such themes of inclusion in these site-specific installations relate to a broader discussion on the role of the spectator and the shaping of audiences within public arts festivals. This discussion will then become the starting point for a further consideration of how events such as *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* and the *Works Art and Design Festival* distribute audiences across sites in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.



Figure 1. Susanna Barlow, *The Potato Project*. Installation at *The Works Art and Design Festival*, June 19 to July 1, 2015.

### 3.3 Growing Community at Edmonton's Sir Winston Churchill Square

One of the most apparent themes that surfaces in the discussion of public festivals is that of community building. This analysis is thus enhanced by the theoretical framework of scholars whose areas of research include the physical and psychodynamic qualities of urban spaces, and a preoccupation with the complex and sometimes problematic relationships between the evolution of cultural practices, the city, and the spectator as a common thread that runs through all of these texts. For this reason, it might be helpful to briefly discuss some of their ideas as a means of providing a context for this specific study of community and civic identity in two of Edmonton's largest urban arts festivals, and how these issues connect to a broader discussion of Rancière's work on spectatorship.

To begin, it is crucial to recognize "community" as a constructed concept that drives much of the rhetoric on public arts festivals such as *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. While this thesis calls attention to how the theme of community can serve a positive function within these festivals, it is also necessary to acknowledge the ways in which narratives of inclusion can become challenging in civic spectacles. For example, in *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media*, curators Sarah Cook and Beryl Graham both note that alternative approaches to curating must remain highly sensitive to the communities in which they are working. According to the authors, this is largely due to the fact that public audiences tend to be "rigorously unforgiving of artworks being 'parachuted' into an unsuspecting community."<sup>146</sup> This is also a concern for Kay Anderson and Phillip Mar in "Urban Curating: The 'Interspaces' of Art

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<sup>146</sup> Sarah Cook and Beryl Graham, *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 226.

Collaboration in Western Sydney,” who caution that artistic interventions into “local”<sup>147</sup> publics are often problematic because of their reliance on a homogenized concept of community and audiences. Like Cook and Graham, the authors argue that creating meaningful dialogues between artists and their audience depends on a more productive understanding of the local as “a nexus of elements assembled through professional practices in horizontal movements across sectoral domains.”<sup>148</sup> In other words, Mar and Anderson believe that the curation of site-specific and event-based projects must look towards the specificities of the place in which they are situated, rather than attempting to construct a universal narrative of “community,” as with Ono’s project.<sup>149</sup>

Kristie Jamieson offers a similar critique of the urban arts festival that is wary of its potential to rely on essentialist ideas of community. In the essay “Tracing Festival Imaginaries: Between Affective Urban Idioms and Administrative Assemblages,” the author analyzes the notion of the Festival City and the convergence of cultural production and urban planning in contemporary arts festivals. For Jamieson, this intersection between cultural production and public administration is indicative of an underlying power relationship that she refers to as the “Creative City paradigm.”<sup>150</sup> She argues that such a reading of this paradigm must move beyond a naïve account of urban festivals and the affective potential of city spaces in order to uncover the ways in which administrative agendas circulate through fictional, historical, local, and global elements

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<sup>147</sup> Kay Anderson and Phillip Mar, “Urban Curating: The “Interspaces” of Art Collaboration in Western Sydney,” *Space and Culture* 20, no. 10 (2012): 1.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> Kristie Jamieson, “Tracing Festival Imaginaries: Between Affective Urban Idioms and Administrative Assemblages.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (2013): 1.

of metropolitan ideologies.<sup>151</sup> By recognizing the circulation of these elements in urban cultural festivals, Jamieson believes that it is possible to understand how “the social legitimization of cities is made through conforming to processes of signification.”<sup>152</sup>

This concern for the essentialist or universalizing effects of public arts festivals is further explored in Heather McLean’s article “Cracks in the Creative City: The Contradictions of Community Arts Practice.” Here, McLean discusses the very real consequences of these issues within the context of urban arts festivals in Canada. She argues that, quite often, these sensationalized events encourage collaboration between artists and the public “as civic boosters strive to stage cities in order to attract investment.”<sup>153</sup> The author situates her discussion of the 2009 *Luminato* festival in the context of other arts festivals in Toronto, including *Nuit Blanche* and its arts intervention *Time Out/Game Out*, which took place in 2008. McLean dismisses the utopianism of these events and questions the risk of gentrification and production of what she describes as “colonial discovery narratives.”<sup>154</sup> While these issues are out of the scope of this particular thesis case study, McLean’s article is an important reminder that a strictly theoretical consideration of site-specific arts events in city centres risks overlooking the political implications of these events.

The relationship between public arts festivals and urban space, then, requires an understanding of the city and its communities as an object of analysis that is made up of numerous representations and symbols that exist in tension with one another. In *Re-*

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, 2–4.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>153</sup> Heather McLean, “Cracks in the Creative City: The Contradictions of Community Arts Practice,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 6 (2014): 2156.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, 2160.

*presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital, and Culture in the 21st-Century Metropolis*, sociologist Rob Shields argues that cities are “the result of a cultural act of classification.”<sup>155</sup> These representations, he explains, are largely constructed in the visual realm and “are always incomplete ciphers of parts of the tactile movement of urban life.”<sup>156</sup> Shields provides a comprehensive overview of the ways in which the city has been examined as a theoretical object, including a critique of Deleuze’s theory of the Nomad and the State, Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism, and the Situationists of the mid-twentieth century, among others.<sup>157</sup> By doing so, the author constructs a methodology for thinking about the city that is multi-faceted and dialectical, rather than one that imposes what he describes as “monological coherence and closure.”<sup>158</sup>

This body of literature, highlighted in Shield’s essay, is central to an informed discussion of community building in both Ono’s and Barlow’s work at Sir Winston Churchill Square, because of its shared focus on the city as a representation governed by specific power relations.<sup>159</sup> However, in spite of the negative implications that may arise in a discussion on community and political agendas in public arts festivals, the focus of this thesis is to uncover the various strategies for constructing an image of community in these specific installations at Sir Winston Churchill Square. For this reason, it is also worth considering the affective experience of these installations and the function of

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<sup>155</sup> Rob Shields, “A Guide to Urban Representation and What to Do About It: Alternative Traditions of Urban Theory,” in *Re-presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital, and Culture in the 21st-Century Metropolis*, ed. Anthony King (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 227.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 240–245.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

desire that surfaces in the attempt to construct a cohesive vision of the city, both individually and collectively speaking.

In her introduction to *Outside Belongings*, cultural theorist Elspeth Probyn questions the relevance of identity as a theoretical concept in current cultural studies debates. To Probyn, the use of words that attempt to categorize identity are now so commonly used in postmodern discourse that they have become nothing more than fixed descriptions, and are valued primarily for their use as a collection of “implacable statements that suppress, at times, questions about what identity is really for.”<sup>160</sup> In an attempt to avoid the limitations that these theories impose, she campaigns for a new reading of subjectivity as the desire for inclusion, one that remains a continually fluid and negotiable process of identification.<sup>161</sup> Rather than seeking to describe or investigate these concepts as a final and conclusive destination point, the author attempts “to figure the desire that individuals have to belong, a tenacious and fragile desire . . . that is increasingly performed in the knowledge of the impossibility of ever really and truly belonging.”<sup>162</sup>

In the context of this thesis, Probyn’s work provides a theoretical framework for locating and understanding the central role that desire plays in both Ono and Barlow’s installations. By substituting the finite aspect of terms like “identity” for the affective and process-oriented qualities inherent to “desire,” Probyn’s work contributes to an understanding of how individuals make sense of themselves through their lived

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<sup>160</sup> Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 9.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

associations with objects, spaces, and each other.<sup>163</sup> For this reason, her work is integral to a reading of these two works in relation to other discourses on concepts of place and community. Furthermore, it contributes to a reading of the work of Alan Blum, whose theorizing on the complexities of representing cities draws on both discourse analysis and the function of desire.

In *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, Blum argues that the substantial body of literature that has emerged on the city in recent years has come to reduce its subject to “nothing but a sign”<sup>164</sup> that is exchanged among individuals as they might any other commodity.<sup>165</sup> Citing the work of Post-Structuralist Jean Baudrillard, Blum explains that such an assumption is an inadequate means of theorizing about the city, as it implies that those who transmit or receive these signs are complacent spectators who lack a capacity to reflect on this relationship or their role within it.<sup>166</sup> Dissatisfied with this conclusion, Blum takes up the notion that the city is merely a sign as the starting point for his discussion on “the imaginative structure of the city,”<sup>167</sup> a term that he uses to define the “ensemble of practices through which its territoriality is engaged and oriented to, used as grounds of interference and action.”<sup>168</sup> It is this concept of the imaginative structure of the city that will be taken up as the overarching framework for all of the theories considered during this discussion on audiences and the community agendas of public arts festivals.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>164</sup> Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 24.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

What makes Blum's theory productive for this analysis is its insistence on the autonomy of the individual who actively participates in the transmission and reception of signs, an idea central to Rancière's work on spectatorship. This is made apparent in Blum's introduction to *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, where he addresses the tendency for academic scholarship to concentrate on the influence of external forces on viewers. Blum sums up this issue by stating that: "Whether the actors are viewed as governed by conditions of forceful generality or of particular detail, they are still seen as absorbed by externals rather than as oriented to whatever absorbs them."<sup>169</sup> He argues that this has resulted in the tendency to speak of the city as "a context or background for a variety of individual actions . . . but not as an order that mobilizes commitment to its ways as particular."<sup>170</sup> The assumption that the city is merely a sign, then, becomes the starting point for the author's inquiry into a productive understanding of the city and of how we are positioned within it through both extrinsic and intrinsic factors.

The connection to Blum's investigation of what he calls the "imaginative structure of the city" and a discussion on spectatorship is further emphasized through Blum's direct use of both Deleuze and Rancière's theories, as well as the work of Lacan and Baudrillard. For example, in speaking about the sign, Blum alludes to Deleuze's argument that a study of signs "is only the beginning and not the end of the kind of inquiry we will undertake."<sup>171</sup> Additionally, Blum's text directly cites and expands upon Rancière's argument that "the objective of inquiry [is] one of mapping together a

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, 25

<sup>171</sup> Ibid, 26.

discursive space and a territorial space.”<sup>172</sup> As Blum explains, this notion of “mapping” both discursive and tangible space points to the ways in which the city, whether or not it exists in the literal sense, is nevertheless grounded within the discourse concerned with it as an object of analysis. Thus, the concept of the city as “nothing but a sign,” for Blum, becomes the starting point for thinking about cities because it invites us to “imagine discursive practices directed to clarifying, contesting, and refashioning different senses of the city as an image (as a sign, an order, a community).”<sup>173</sup>

Blum’s theory of “the imaginative structure of the city,” therefore, invites a reading of how Ono’s *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace at Nuit Blanche Edmonton* and Barlow’s *Potato Project at The Works Art and Design Festival* strive to make a sense of community visible at Edmonton’s Sir Winston Churchill Square. This is evident in both installations in several ways. First, and most obviously, both *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and the *Potato Project* require the gathering of individuals as an essential part of the meaning making process. Whether it is through the accumulation of handwritten wishes on paper tags strung onto trees, or the sight of festival attendees lounging amidst oversized potato planters, both pieces begin to formulate the narrative of community through physical presence. The physicality of *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and *Potato Project* as a gathering place is the first and most immediate way that visitors to the festivals experience these installations, and the community they represent at the Square, as “a locus of collectivization,” where “discourse is joined to the space of this (interpretive) territory

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid, 27. Original quote from Jacques Rancière, “Discovering New Worlds: Politics of Travel and Metaphors,” in *Travellers’ Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, edited by G. Robertson et al (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1994), 28–29.

<sup>173</sup> Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, 29.

which marks its boundaries.”<sup>174</sup> Here, the discourse of “community” that underlies the participatory design of these installations through every day actions, both individual and collectively shared, is enmeshed with the physical territory of the Square, thus operating as a locus of collectivization between the real space inhabited by the art installations and the metaphors of community they convey to audiences.

This idea of collectivization, articulated by Blum and informed by his reading of Rancière’s writing on discourse, enriches an understanding of how the interplay between discursive and physical space in both installations might demonstrate a positive and productive approach to community. As Blum states, echoing much of the discussion in Rancière’s *Emancipated Spectator*, it is unsatisfactory to base an analysis of community on the assumption that spectators are always subject to external influences.<sup>175</sup> Blum’s definition of the city as “an oriented object,”<sup>176</sup> is particularly significant to this discussion because it emphasizes the need to understand festivals such as *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* and *The Works Art and Design Festival* as events that people willingly and consciously go to and participate in. This challenges any inclination to dismiss projects such as *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and *Potato Project* as a means for festivals to impose an idyllic civic unity on their audiences and, instead, allows for a consideration of how the Square serves as “an oriented object” for meaningful engagements with festival spectators.

The potential for *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and *Potato Project* to facilitate productive formations of community lies in Blum’s belief that, as “oriented objects,” the

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 29.

territorial and discursive spaces of cities become “a course of action . . . around the distinction [they make] in collective life.”<sup>177</sup> Taking up the idea that such spaces imply the call to action, the author equates the community of a city as a form of desire, rather than an attainable or finite goal. He describes the desire for a shared sense of belonging as “the ‘we’ of the city”<sup>178</sup> that is performed by different groups within a space in response to various concerns about what constitutes a city.<sup>179</sup> This mixing of opinions and desires, the author states, inevitably leads to a range of “interpretive attempts to appropriate the voice of the city,”<sup>180</sup> and is best understood as continual and simultaneous processes of problem-solving by distinct collectives.<sup>181</sup>

Blum’s work invites a reading of these installations as a response to the rhetorical questions about what a city and, by extension, its community is. In the case of *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace*, this idea of desire functions at multiple levels in Ono’s installation, from the individual act of wishing to its relationship with the institutional desires of the festival itself. This is immediately apparent in the presentation of this work in media coverage of the festival, where the prestige of hosting an internationally-known artist and the association with a worldwide collaborative project is emphasized. For example, the *Edmonton Journal*’s interview with Ono states that “Ono’s work *Wish Tree* shoehorns international prestige and credibility into the late-night art happening’s Edmonton debut,”<sup>182</sup> while numerous other media sources repeatedly boast the Edmonton edition of

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 29–30.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Fish Griwkowsky, “Yoko Ono’s Nuit Blanche art includes *Wish Tree* forest,” *Edmonton Journal*, September 21, 2015. Accessed May 20, 2016.

*Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* to be the largest presentation of the work to date.<sup>183</sup> This demonstrates what Blum calls “the appropriation of the voice of the city,”<sup>184</sup> where Edmonton’s community gains both a visual presence and sense of prestige through its association with this worldwide collaborative project. However, since the author’s argument that community connotes simultaneous processes, which may be incongruous at times, the significance of this project at *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* calls for an alternative reading of how this work might function.

It is important to remain conscious of how such installations aimed at creating a so-called unified, global community can lend themselves to processes of homogenization, marginalization, and colonialism. Prior to attending *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, the potentially controversial themes of community present in *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* seemed problematic to a study of how these festivals might positively influence alternative approaches to curating and spectator experience. Upon visiting *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, my own observations and affective experience of the work suggest that an alternative reading of Ono’s work is not only possible, but imperative to a better understanding of emancipatory engagement as it is understood in this thesis.

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<http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/local-arts/yoko-onos-nuit-blanche-art-includes-wish-tree-forest>.

<sup>183</sup> Several articles and social media posts make this claim. It is described as the largest installation of the piece in media sources such as “Yoko Ono installation to head to *Nuit Blanche*,” *Edmonton Metro News*, July 30, 2015, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://www.metronews.ca/news/edmonton/2015/07/30/yoko-ono-installation-to-head-nuit-blanche.html>. The work is described as the festival’s “grandest gesture” in Fish Griwkowsky, “Edmonton’s *Nuit Blanche* a gigantic art party – and more,” *Edmonton Journal*, September 21, 2015, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/local-arts/edmontons-nuit-blanche-a-gigantic-art-party-and-more>. The *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* official Facebook page also highlights the work as the largest to date in a post published on July 30, 2015.

<sup>184</sup> Blum, 30.

One of the most striking qualities of *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* at *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* was the audience interaction. Repeat visits to the installation throughout the evening showed audiences of all ages interacting with the work, both individually and collectively. This included groups of friends, couples, and parents with their children, who not only stopped to tie their own wishes to the branches of the trees, but would also walk throughout the installation to read the wishes left behind by others. These wishes varied from altruistic calls for world peace to smaller hopes and dreams specific to the author.

After experiencing *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* first-hand, and observing other festival attendees interacting with the work, I propose a more productive reading of the work based on its affective qualities. This is further reinforced by a statement made by the festival's curator, David Dymant, in which he describes his own deeply personal encounter with Ono's *Wish Tree* project prior to its presentation at *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. In an interview with the *Edmonton Journal*, he recalls:

I took my parents to a Yoko Ono show, and there was a *Wish Tree*. My father's brother was dying, and he went up and wrote a quote from a Dylan Thomas poem — he wanted to address the most emotional thing in his life at that time, and evoked poetry, which I'd never seen him do in his entire life, and participated in this artwork — all at the same time. Without thinking about it. Just because it presented itself.<sup>185</sup>

This statement by Dymant suggests a motive to include *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* for its ability to provide meaningful engagement with audiences that recognizes and celebrates their capacity to interpret the work in their own way. Based on this statement,

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<sup>185</sup> Fish Griwkowsky, "Edmonton's *Nuit Blanche* a gigantic art party—and more," *Edmonton Journal*, September 21, 2015, accessed April 23, 2017, <http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/local-arts/edmontons-nuit-blanche-a-gigantic-art-party-and-more>.

and my own encounter with the work at *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, I would argue that this installation can coincide with a discourse on emancipatory engagement.

There is no doubt that *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* is strongly informed by ideals of utopianism. In her speech for the *Imagine Peace Tower* inauguration ceremony, Ono enthusiastically describes the tower as a means of uniting participating countries around the world into a peaceful and global community. She states:

We are here together, billions of us, standing here together at the dawn of a new age... determined to shift the axis of the world to love, peace, and joy, by loving and caring for all lives on earth.... the light is cleansing, spiritually and mentally, and physically. It's there – if you can't go there, just thinking about the fact that it's there. Just the fact that it's there, and you know it, is going to connect and unite all of us.<sup>186</sup>

This sense of utopianism is also present in the context of *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* at *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, in which Ono describes what she believes to be the larger transformative power of individual and collective participation in the project:

I was always in support of peace, of course. And many people are. It's so sad that we human beings — some of them — feel they have to exercise violence to change the world. I feel it's much easier, and much more effective to change the world with the power of love.... it's a wish from somebody to... up there. It has to be a very private communication. I don't read it. People say, 'If you don't read it are you afraid there might be some really terrible things?' But I really think the people's wishes are so strong. If there's one or two that are bad, wishing for something terrible, they'll be transformed into good wishes.<sup>187</sup>

Clearly, the theme of utopia is unmistakable in the artist's description of both the *Imagine Peace Tower* and the related presentation of *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace*. It is crucial to note that, while utopianism as a concept establishes an entry point for analyzing this piece in the context of public arts festivals and their audiences, the goal of this thesis is not to argue whether these utopian ideals are attainable in any concrete

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<sup>186</sup> Ono, YouTube video, 0:05:55 to 0:09:15.

<sup>187</sup> Griwkowsky, "Yoko Ono's Nuit Blanche art includes Wish Tree forest."

form. Rather, this thesis is concerned with the way that this utopianism functions as, drawing on the work of Blum, a “discursive practice”<sup>188</sup> for reshaping an alternative vision for the city according to the individual desires and thoughts of its citizen spectators. Moreover, Blum’s argument that the popular dismissal of the city as a sign is rooted in a rejection of utopianism invites a reconsideration of the significance of this theme to public arts festivals such as *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. To further understand this, it is worth considering the work of geographer and Marxist-thinker David Harvey in relation to Blum’s theories.

Like Blum, Harvey recognizes a widespread rejection of utopianism in recent academic scholarship. In *Spaces of Hope*, Harvey examines the history of utopian movements and the effects of capitalism and globalization at the end of the twentieth century. Dissatisfied with the complete rejection of utopianism, the author argues that the collapse of such ideals merely points to a “collapse of specific utopian forms.”<sup>189</sup> Rather than dismissing this concept altogether or relying on an outmoded belief in “some perfected emancipatory process,”<sup>190</sup> he proposes a new method of “dialectical utopianism.”<sup>191</sup> In other words, Harvey’s text suggests that, although widely mistrusted, the concept of utopia can remain a constructive force in the world when it is understood not as a finite destination, but as a kind of “endlessly open experimentation with the possibilities of spatial forms.”<sup>192</sup> Harvey’s work is relative to the use of Blum in this thesis, as well as its larger exploration of Rancière’s ideas in *The Emancipated*

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<sup>188</sup> Blum, 29.

<sup>189</sup> David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 195.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*, 196.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*, 182.

*Spectator*, because, like Blum and Rancière, the author’s discussion maintains an emphasis on the autonomy of the spectator. By considering utopia as a process instead of a geographically-founded form,<sup>193</sup> it becomes possible to understand that both individual and collective desires are necessary for the shaping of cities and communities.<sup>194</sup> According to the author, this alternative approach to utopianism invites its participants “to act as conscious architects of our fates rather than ‘helpless puppets’ of the institutional and imaginative worlds we inhabit.”<sup>195</sup>

It can be argued, then, that the presentation of *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace at Nuit Blanche Edmonton* encourages a consideration of how community is constructed through public arts festivals. One signification that immediately surfaces is that of a desired, imaginary cosmopolitanism for the city of Edmonton. However, by considering the installation in the context of both Blum and Harvey’s theories, it is possible to suggest that this particular work also adopts a process-minded approach to community that strives for momentary personal engagements with festival audiences that are oriented to this site, rather than simply dismissing the utopianism of the installation or arguing that it serves mainly as a sign of essentialist civic unity. This reading is further strengthened by considering the curator’s comments concerning his prior encounter with the work, and the first-hand experience of the installation’s affective qualities during the research phase of this thesis. The simple act of inviting spectators to record their own wish, whatever it may be, for the forest of wish trees at Sir Winston Churchill Square invites “the free play

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 173.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, 159.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

of imagination in the search for alternatives,”<sup>196</sup> as Harvey explains, while also recognizing that “every single one of us has something to think, say, and do”<sup>197</sup> when it comes to navigating the many representations of their city or community that they encounter in their day to day lives.

This relationship between the work as an “encountered sign”<sup>198</sup> and the significance of its affective meaning is also significant to a reading of Barlow’s *Potato Project* at the *Works Art and Design Festival*. While *Potato Project* differs from *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* because of its emphasis on the notion of a unique, regionally-specific heritage, as opposed to being part of a bigger, homogenized and celebrity-driven project, the installation also highlights the ways in which the potential of festivals to construct more productive narratives of community lies in understanding the discursive practices that motivate these desires for collectivization and inclusion. Again, the work of Harvey helps to support the use of Blum and Rancière in this chapter. This is evident in Barlow’s approach to what she describes as a “social practice.”<sup>199</sup> It might be tempting to interpret the installation as a romantic mythologizing of Edmonton’s past, or what Harvey sights as yearning for “a perfected golden age . . . and hierarchical mode of social relating that is non-conflicting and harmonious”<sup>200</sup> that plagues much of the previous discourses on utopianism. However, to read Barlow’s work as a strictly nostalgic desire for what might seem like Edmonton’s own golden age would be to ignore the connection between the

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, 159.

<sup>198</sup> Deleuze, 16.

<sup>199</sup> Barlow, “Susanna Barlow - The Potato Project,” 0:01:32.

<sup>200</sup> Harvey, 160.

project, community collaboration, and ecologically-friendly discourses of sustainable urban life and urban agriculture.

Barlow's description of the piece is as one that brings together a diverse range of collectives and industries through a series of collaborative projects, a perspective that moves beyond Harvey's warning against a "nostalgic strain" of utopianism.<sup>201</sup> While *Potato Project* is inspired by the artist's recent discovery of old family photographs, it is insufficient to credit the resulting installation as strictly a tribute to nostalgia. What distinguishes this work from other nostalgic pieces, or what Harvey characterizes as "the production of sanitized collective memories [and] the nurturing of uncritical aesthetic sensibilities,"<sup>202</sup> is its use of this regionally-specific history to activate contemporary social practices. As Barlow explains:

While sorting through hundreds of old slides from my grandmother's house, a slide of her home neighborhood caught my attention. It was a photo of her home street, where I had been countless times, but the urban landscape was entirely unfamiliar. The street was flanked by mounds of potato plants in each front lawn.... This family slide show event I mentioned happened before I received the invitation from the festival, but it became a part of my memory well which I drew from in conceptualizing the project. When I received the invitation, I knew I didn't want to transplant my current body of work to the square.... At the time of the project, there was a lot of kinetic energy. There was a wave of investment in the downtown core, new artist-run centres popping up, a new mayor—a lot to be excited about. I could feel it in public sentiment, anticipating this forward movement.<sup>203</sup>

Barlow's installation at *The Works Art and Design Festival* is not simply a musing on nostalgia, which Harvey cautions can be detrimental to a productive form of utopian thinking. This is because it simultaneously references a particular time in Edmonton's history, while establishing new forms of collaboration and engagement for contemporary

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>203</sup> Barlow, email to the artist, June 26, 2016.

festival audiences. Although the artist credits the inspiration of this particular project to largely anecdotal evidence, there is an interesting parallel between *Potato Project* and the history of urban agriculture in the city. This is largely supported by the recent publication, and currently one of the only texts related to this particular subject, by Kathryn Chase Merrett entitled *Why Grow Here: Essays on Edmonton's Gardening History*. Here, the author provides an overview of the history of various urban agricultural and gardening practices in Alberta's capital, including its participation in the nation-wide "Victory Gardens" campaign of the 1930s and 40s, to its contemporary organizations such as Sustainable Food Edmonton and Voices of the Soil.<sup>204</sup> For Merrett, gardening "is as political an act as it is personal,"<sup>205</sup> and while earlier histories of community gardening initiatives were motivated by a fear of food shortage in times of war and economic downturn, contemporary approaches to sustainable urban agriculture stem from a "desire for social change."<sup>206</sup> However, in addition to the well-meaning social practice of gardening discussed by Merrett and emphasized in Barlow's work, it is also worth noting that, as scholars such as Virginia Jenkins and Robert Messia have argued, the desire to stimulate the soil in order to produce for a lush, green lawn has also been long associated with a desire for upward mobility within a neighbourhood, which signified an increased or elevated social status in many suburban neighbourhoods throughout North America.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Kathryn Chase Merrett, *Why Grow Here: Essays on Edmonton's Gardening History* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2015), 139–141.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid*, 141.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, 163.

<sup>207</sup> The social status of suburban lawn care is well-established in Virginia Scott Jenkins' publication, *The Lawn: A History of American Obsession* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1994). This is further discussed in Robert Messia's essay entitled "Lawns as

It can be argued, then, that the presence of the *Potato Project* at the *Works Art and Design Festival* is informed by, and contributes to, this desire for social change in Edmonton. This is evident throughout the project in numerous ways. First, and most obviously, it is present in the installation at the 30th annual *Works Art and Design Festival*, which relied on a partnership between the festival staff and Edmonton Potato Growers Ltd. This same emphasis on social change is later seen in the conclusion to the project at the subsequent Potato Harvest Party, which facilitated community engagement through collaborations with local businesses and organizations such as Operation Fruit Rescue Edmonton, as well as the gifting of nutrient-rich soil for future gardening projects. The result is a project that, according to Merrett, continues the tradition of Edmonton's socially and politically-minded "citizen gardeners . . . for whom the garden is not a private refuge from the world but a model for action in it."<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, by using the festival site as a starting point for a project that extends well beyond its ten-day duration, Barlow's *Potato Project* reconsiders the practice of gardening as a process for meaningful engagement with its local audiences, thereby demonstrating what Harvey has called a "stronger utopianism," in which both "social process and spatial form"<sup>209</sup> intersect.

Through an analysis of *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and *Potato Project*, it is possible to understand how public arts festivals such as *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* and the *Works Art and Design Festival* model new approaches to spectatorship through their shared

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Artifacts: The Evolution of Social and Environmental Implications of Suburban Residential Land Use," in *Suburban Sprawl: Culture, Theory, and Politics* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

<sup>208</sup> Merrett, 246.

<sup>209</sup> Harvey, 196.

narratives of inclusion. It is for this reason that Rancière's theoretical framework becomes a productive starting point for understanding how audiences and places are addressed in terms of community, and, by extension, how words such as "audience" or "spectator" are complicated and often problematic concepts. His criticism of the dichotomy between passivity and activity common to discussions on spectatorship and institutional forces, such as public arts festivals, invites an investigation of how this dichotomy is reinforced or challenged in other discourses on public spaces and their collectives. This is where the work of theorists such as Blum, Probyn, and Harvey become useful, as both propose alternative ways for thinking about collective engagements with space, while also recognizing spectators as autonomous individuals who are consciously oriented to such sites. What is most important to a reading of how place and community are represented in *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and *Potato Project*, therefore, is the way in which the discourse surrounding the construction of these concepts, in the words of Blum, "mirror the engagement of a people with the modes and meanings of its collectivization."<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Blum, 31.

#### CHAPTER 4: Circulation: (Re)Negotiating Public Space and Spectatorship in *The Works Art and Design Festival and Nuit Blanche Edmonton*

There's always a danger that I sound like a cheerleader, because I truly love *Nuit Blanche*, and I'm cynical about everything. But for me, it's about taking over the city, closing down streets. Sometimes the works can be mediocre, but it's about rediscovering your own city. You see a piece and you go, I've never really looked at the corner this way—is this an artwork, or is this always here? And of course, once people know it's going on, other people come in and fill the gaps.<sup>211</sup>

*David Dymont, interview with the Edmonton Journal*

In a brief interview by Fish Griwkowsky published in the *Edmonton Journal*, curator David Dymont offers insight on his prior experience with public arts festival programming, including former projects with the well-established *Nuit Blanche Toronto*.<sup>212</sup> As demonstrated in this statement by Dymont, much of the media coverage surrounding the event centred on the imagining of crowded city streets occupied by enthusiastic festival attendees. Descriptions of *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, in both local and national press coverage and the event's own promotional materials and social media campaigns, often emphasize the image of a visible, engaged audience and the notion of disrupting, repurposing or reactivating ordinary, utilitarian public spaces for the purposes of artistic expression and increased social interaction.<sup>213</sup> This sentiment is also evident in

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<sup>211</sup> Fish Griwkowsky, "Edmonton's Nuit Blanche a gigantic art party—and more," *Edmonton Journal*, September 21, 2015, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/local-arts/edmontons-nuit-blanche-a-gigantic-art-party-and-more>.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> In this same interview with the *Edmonton Journal*, David Dymont returns to the image of crowded city streets during *Nuit Blanche*, stating that: "To me the hook is "midnight." If you want a theme, the theme is all those people walking through the street in the middle of the night. That's more important than any bullsh— [sic] I would do as a curator, and possibly more important than the individual works" (see Fish Griwkowsky, "Edmonton's *Nuit Blanche* a gigantic art party—and more"). The image of crowded festival streets is underlined on a National scale in an article published in the *Globe and Mail* for Toronto's 10<sup>th</sup> *Nuit Blanche*. The article mentions the various incarnations of the one-night only spectacle across several Canadian cities, but offers a more in-depth

the promotion and discussion of the city's 30<sup>th</sup> annual *Works Art and Design Festival*.<sup>214</sup> Such statements invite a consideration of the ways in which the distribution of objects, images, texts, and spectators across festival grounds plays a central role to much of the narrative and design of these public arts festivals. So, while the first half of this analysis is concerned with the specific strategies for constructing a specific image of Edmonton's community using two centrally-located installations that rely upon collecting and making groups of festival visitors visible within a shared space, the latter half of this thesis research is dedicated to understanding the contrasting, yet equally significant characteristic of both festivals: circulation.

This chapter will continue a discourse analysis of the strategies and narratives of engagement that surface in curatorial programming, media coverage, and maps, in order

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contrast between Toronto's now well-established event and the city of Edmonton as the "new kid on the block," hosting its own *Nuit Blanche* for the first time in 2015. See James Adams, "Has Toronto's *Nuit Blanche* grown too big for its own good?", *Globe and Mail*, September 25, 2015, accessed January 21, 2017,

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/has-torontos-nuit-blanche-grown-too-big-for-its-own-good/article26547483/>.

<sup>214</sup> In media coverage for *The Works Art and Design Festival*, the event's overall attendance is noted as one of its accomplishments. This is evident in articles on the 2015 edition, including: Stephanie Dubois, "The Works Art and Design Festival celebrating 30 years in downtown Edmonton," *Edmonton Metro News*, May 25, 2015, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.metronews.ca/news/edmonton/2015/05/25/the-works-art-and-design-festival-celebrating-30-years-in-downtown-edmonton.html>. The event is described as being among the "gigantic circuses of unrelated art," while also being criticised for being smaller in scale than past versions (see Fish Griwkowsky, "What to see as The Works Art and Design fest goes into its final days", *Edmonton Journal*, June 27, 2015, accessed September 21, 2016,

<http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/festivals/what-to-see-as-the-works-art-design-fest-goes-into-its-final-days>). The three-decade history of the festival and the number of exhibits meant to appeal to a wider general public rather than a niche gallery audience is also prominent in an interview with the festival's Executive Artistic Director, Amber Rooke published in *Vueweekly* (see Paul Blinov, "The Works Arts and Design Festival examines "making space", *Vueweekly*, June 17, 2015, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.vueweekly.com/the-works-art-design-festival-examines-making-space/>).

to examine how the concept of circulation, through various forms of distribution and extension, plays a vital role in the experience of Edmonton's *Nuit Blanche* and *The Works Art and Design Festival*. The goal of this particular study will be to reflect on the tensions between an active and passive reading of these events through a consideration of Rancière's assertion that emancipation "begins when we understand that viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms [the] distribution of position."<sup>215</sup> By doing so, this analysis is intended to contemplate how these events might propose new ways of thinking about spectatorship, while resisting the tendency to rely entirely on the binary of activity and passivity.

It is important to note that a strictly theoretical discussion of spectatorship says very little of the practical aspects that affect how individuals navigate these urban festivals. This poses a challenge to a reading of these events from the perspective of a festival visitor, or what film theorists Burgess and Kredell refer to as an "outsider"<sup>216</sup> voice, which is discussed in greater detail in chapter two of this thesis. However, despite not having comprehensive access to the inner workings of both festivals, it is still possible to also acknowledge how some of the physical characteristics or constraints of urban environments can influence the design of these site-specific civic spectacles. Examples of this are evident when comparing and contrasting several components of *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, including the duration of the festivals, the location of participating venues, festival themes, and strategies for audience engagement. Following the first chapter of this analysis, this chapter will begin

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<sup>215</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 13.

<sup>216</sup> Burgess and Kredell, *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, 159.

with a description of each festival before beginning a closer exploration of relevant theory.

#### **4.1 Under “The Half-Lit Moon” at *Nuit Blanche Edmonton***

Yoko Ono once noted that the paradoxical litmus test to determine cynicism or optimism is inherently flawed. The glass is neither half-empty nor half-full, it is all full: fifty percent with water and fifty percent with air. The observation suggests hopefulness, but ultimately bypasses the dilemma entirely. It serves as a useful, loose, framework for the works in Edmonton’s inaugural *Nuit Blanche*. These projects include video, audio, sculpture, and installation, many with a performative or interactive element.<sup>217</sup>

David Dymont, curatorial statement for *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*

A review of the programming and attractions featured in Edmonton’s *Nuit Blanche* demonstrates that the city’s inaugural all-night art event was ambitious in terms of the number of exhibitions it offered. With a curatorial program that included eleven works under the theme of “Half-Lit Moon”, three special commissions, and seventeen independent entries, most of the exhibits were positioned within a five-minute walk of each other.<sup>218</sup> Food vendors and a night market were also in close proximity to the festival attractions, and a series of performances were scheduled at various venues throughout the evening. As previously discussed, the installation of Yoko Ono’s *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* at Sir Winston Churchill Square served as both the physical and thematic locus of *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*; however, the event extended well past the main grounds of the Square and into the surrounding downtown using various strategies of distribution and circulation.

The venues and projects included in the program varied greatly, from indoor and

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<sup>217</sup> “Under the Half-Lit Moon,” *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://2015.nuitblancheedmonton.ca/the-half-lit-moon/>.

<sup>218</sup> *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, “Map” (Edmonton, 2015).

outdoor installations at civic facilities, such as Gary James Joynes' *Ouroboros*, a large-scale lens-based installation and synaesthetic experience that consumed the lobby of Edmonton City Hall.<sup>219</sup> A few blocks away, on an exterior wall of the city's World Trade Centre, Sasha Krieger's projection *Soliloquy* featured a cinematic montage of solitary figures traversing empty landscapes and whose cries echoed through the surrounding streets. A number of exhibits were hosted by local galleries, including Latitude 53, Harcourt House, and The Drawing Room, as well as workshops and collaborative projects by local artist and community collectives such as the Society of Northern Alberta Print-Artists (SNAP) and iHuman Youth Society. Some installations occupied disused commercial spaces or vacant lots, as in the case of Lee Henderson's thoughtful video installation *The Known Effects of Lightning on the Body*, located at the former Orient Travel Centre, and Priscilla Monge's subversive *Soccer Pitch*, which invited visitors to play on an intentionally bumpy, uneven soccer pitch in Edmonton's Boyle Street area. Other works promoted the complete takeover or disruption of functional public space, including Jon Sasaki's *Bouncy Highrise*, a haphazard tower constructed from inflatable children's bouncy castles that occupied the closed-off street space in front of the Art Gallery of Alberta, and *Half the Air in a Given Space*, in which artist Martin Creed filled the pedway between the City Centre mall and the North Parkade with balloons according to a specific mathematical formula.<sup>220</sup>

Already, the importance of distribution is apparent through the exhibition of multiple works across numerous sites. This theme of distribution is extended through *Nuit*

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<sup>219</sup> Gary James Joynes, "Artist Statement," *clinkersound.com*, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://www.clinkersound.com/frequency-painting/>.

<sup>220</sup> "Programming," *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, accessed August 6, 2016, <http://2015.nuitblancheedmonton.ca/programming/>.

*Blanche Edmonton*'s strategies for audience engagement. This becomes most apparent through the repeated theme of "mapping." Maps are an essential tool of these events, and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* was no exception. Paper maps, designed by Jaime Calayo with local communications agency Calder Bateman, were dispersed to audiences during the event. The map could be used in two different ways, and provided a practical layout of the exhibition sites and attractions, as well as an element of play in its design. According to the description available on Calayo's website, the intention was to reimage the map not as "... a wayfinding tool but a way to randomize and record your adventure with the hopes that people would encounter entirely new and authentic experiences in familiar spaces."<sup>221</sup> This square, two-dimensional map could be folded into a three-dimensional, origami toy commonly known as a paper fortune teller, which participants could manipulate in order to "help randomize [their] evening."<sup>222</sup> When used in this manner, the map would reveal a number of suggestions for exploring the festival through whimsical descriptions of exhibitions alongside the corresponding number of the work's location. Some examples of directions provided by the origami version of the map include statements such as "Wish upon a tree," "Zen out at City Hall," and "Lose yourself in balloons."<sup>223</sup>

This theme of mapping was also emphasized in the *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* mobile application, also designed by Jaime Calayo with Calder Bateman, which festival goers could download for a small fee of approximately three dollars. While the development of an event-specific mobile "app" is not unique to Edmonton and is considerably common

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<sup>221</sup> Jaime Calayo, "NBE Wherever the Night Takes Us," *jaimecalayo.com*, accessed September 10, 2016, <http://jaimecalayo.com/portfolio/nbe-wherever-the-night-takes-us/>.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, "Map" (Edmonton, 2015).

among *Nuit Blanche* style events, it is crucial to acknowledge its contribution to the concept of circulation discussed throughout this chapter. The mobile app contained most of the information listed on the official website for *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, including festival amenities and information on participating artists and projects. A digital version of the map was also included. However, what is most interesting about the mobile app was its series of pre-set text notifications, which were randomized and delivered to subscribers throughout the night at fifteen-minute intervals. These messages promoted the exhibitions at the festival and suggest different forms or opportunities for audience engagement.<sup>224</sup> Some examples include:

Nuit Blanche has officially begun! Start your adventure at Churchill Square and tie a wish to Yoko Ono's wishtrees (delivered at 19:00)

What are these buildings saying to one another? (delivered at 19:45)

Don't miss Vickerd's Dance of the Cranes presented by Ice District. Watch them sway from 11-12pm (delivered at 21:30)

Venture outside of the core and follow us to Latitude53 (delivered at 24:15)

Isn't it better when we're together? (delivered at 01:30)

We lit the fire and now we'll put it out. You'll see what we mean at Lee Henderson's site (delivered at 02:15)

The notifications were continuously delivered to subscribers of the mobile app between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m., with a final sign-off that read “All good things come to end. See you in 2017.”<sup>225</sup> The visual identity of the mobile app was cohesive with other promotional materials for the festival, including the website and the monthly newsletters leading up to the event that individuals could subscribe to online.

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<sup>224</sup> Jaime Calayo, email message to the author, May 6, 2016.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

These materials often featured colourful images of Google map-style markers as a graphic treatment, taking them from a strictly functional use as pinpoints on a map and adopting them as signifiers for the event's narrative of rediscovering Edmonton's city centre. The official social media campaigns of *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* followed a similar format. The event was further marketed through Facebook and Instagram, where images were posted that users could manipulate using various filters and in-app editing features to "reveal" coded messages. Examples include images of Edmonton's downtown and local architecture superimposed on brightly coloured backdrops that, when altered, contained messages such as "We will discover it in the night."<sup>226</sup>

In the context of this thesis, both the aesthetic and functional uses of mapping become the starting point for a deeper consideration of the ways in which circulation plays a vital role to *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. This is further explored through an examination of the layout and design for *The Works Art and Design Festival*. While this event varies greatly from its nocturnal counterpart, it shares the same concerns for circulation and the distribution of audiences through a renegotiation of public space. For this reason, it is now necessary to discuss key components of the festival, including theme, participating venues, and promotional materials.

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<sup>226</sup> Nuit Blanche Edmonton, Instagram post published on July 31, 2015, accessed January 21, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/5zZB29Au0n/?taken-by=nuitblancheed>.

## 4.2 “Making Space”: *The Works Art and Design Festival*

So “making space” means making room, making space for installation work in a physical sense. This applies to a lot of our installations in Churchill Square, as well as making space for representation, and considering the space that we occupy in thoughtful ways, and how that comes through in various art projects.... People who you wouldn’t imagine entering an art gallery, or entering into an art dialogue, have engaged in conversation just as complex [as any others], as far as understanding what a rather esoteric piece is about... it might start with a comment like, “Whoa, what is this guy doing?” but then, with a little bit of information, it develops into a conversation where that person is, in many ways, repeating the artist statement without ever having been given it.<sup>227</sup>

*Amber Rooke, interview with Vue Weekly*

In an interview by Paul Blinov for *Vue Weekly*, Executive Artistic Director Amber Rooke elaborates on the notion of “Making Space,” which served as the theme for the 30th annual *Works Art and Design Festival*. As previously mentioned this event is held annually over a thirteen-day period and distinguishes itself as the largest free public arts and design festival in North America.<sup>228</sup> To create a festival that is, as The Works International Visual Arts Society describes, “greater than the sum of its many parts,”<sup>229</sup> projects included in the 2015 edition of *The Works Art and Design Festival* were distributed across more than thirty sites using a variety of display methods. The main grounds of the festival, located at City Hall’s Sir Winston Churchill Square, consisted of several pavilions showcasing community projects and workshops, food vendors, a local art market, and a large main stage that hosted musical performances each day.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Amber Rooke, interview by Paul Blinov, “The Works Art & Design Festival examines “making space,”” *Vue Weekly*, June 17, 2015, accessed September 21, 2016. <http://www.vueweekly.com/the-works-art-design-festival-examines-making-space/>.

<sup>228</sup> The Works Art and Design Festival, “Festival Info,” *The Works International Visual Arts Society*, accessed October 5, 2016, <http://www.theworks.ab.ca/festival-info/>.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> The Works International Visual Arts Society, “The Works Art and Design Festival Guide,” (Edmonton, 2015), 3–13.

While Susanna Barlow's *Potato Project* is emblematic of the festival's ideals of community and inclusion, it also shared the main festival grounds with several curatorial projects and attractions. Unlike *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, which featured eleven exhibits selected by a single lead-curator, the *Works Art and Design Festival* displayed a series of pop-up exhibitions organized by multiple curators on its main grounds. Examples include an exhibition entitled *In Transit: Mediated Identities in Space*, which was curated by Yang Lim and explored the negotiation of both real and virtual space through technology, and Emily MacDonald's *Transmutation*, a collection of work by emerging artists that questioned identity construction in popular culture.<sup>231</sup> Other solo projects included *Into the Forest, Into my Soul*, a sculptural installation by Sky Hoffos, and *Preservation Project*, a research-based photographic and illustrative exhibit inspired by the neglected spaces of Edmonton's Boyle McCauley area.<sup>232</sup>

In addition to art installations, the grounds served as the site for workshops and public outreach programs. For example, there were workshops by Graphic Designers of Canada and Print Machine, a local silkscreening company that produced t-shirts and hosted a free, participatory demonstration.<sup>233</sup> Projects such as Ryan Wispinski's  *Holding Space* and Mandy Espezel's *Paper Leaves/Warm Small Hands: Reimagined Sensations* allowed visitors to watch the artists at work on projects and installations over the duration of the festival. The festival also included a number of performances throughout its thirteen-day run, including a performance by Tony Olivares Dance company that resulted in the creation of a large-scale gesture painting through contemporary dance,

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

after which audiences were encouraged to cut or tear away a piece of the completed painting to take home. On June 27th, the festival also hosted its 14th annual MADE Street Furniture Competition, an industrial design contest that invited interested members of the public to construct pieces of furniture using no more than three different materials.<sup>234</sup>

Like *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, the artistic programming for the festival was extended throughout Edmonton's downtown core using pop-up installations that appeared in restaurants, hotel lobbies, banks, and public offices.<sup>235</sup> It is worth noting here that since both *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* adopted Sir Winston Churchill Square as their main grounds, there was some overlap between locations used for both festivals, such as Edmonton City Hall, Stanley A. Milner Library, and the World Trade Centre. However, unlike *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*, the longer duration of *The Works Art and Design Festival* means that this particular event is not without some limitations when it comes to its circulation through or distribution across Edmonton's downtown. Perhaps most challenging is the fact that, while the exhibitions located at the main grounds of *The Works Art and Design Festival* remained open from 11:00 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. every day, the availability of the works displayed in the festival's satellite locations depended on the host venues' hours of operation. The inaccessibility of many of the exhibitions during the festival did not go unnoticed in media coverage of the event. An article in the *Edmonton Journal* noted that "because the *Works* sets up in independent galleries, a number of shows were either inaccessible most of the week due to limited gallery hours... and some were not even mounted halfway

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid, 3.

through the festival at a couple spots.”<sup>236</sup> In some cases, the restricted hours of smaller artist-run centres, as in the case of the Creative Practices Institute, meant that exhibitions highlighted in the 2015 festival’s promotional material were only open to the public for three days out of the event’s nearly two-week duration.<sup>237</sup>

In addition to its shared concern for a wider distribution of exhibits and projects, the *Works Art and Design Festival* employed its own means of mapping the city and generating public interest in its various sites and exhibits. This festival followed a more conventional approach to its promotional materials and offered multi-page newsprint festival guides that provided maps and further information about the participating artists and projects. There was no mobile app available for this event, but attempts were made by the festival organizers to gather large concentrations of people at specific times during the event. This was done through free public walking tours, which were offered daily at 2:00pm, 4:00pm, and 6:00pm and covered a large section of the main grounds while also encouraging audiences to continue visiting the satellite exhibitions. According to the official festival guide, bicycle tours were also offered on two separate occasions in order to extend public programming to locations that were beyond the areas covered by the regular walking tours.<sup>238</sup> This same guide highlights the festival’s special “Roving Receptions,” a once daily reception that takes place at different sites throughout the

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<sup>236</sup> Fish Griwkowsky, “What to see as The Works Art and Design fest goes into its final days”, *Edmonton Journal*, June 27, 2015, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/festivals/what-to-see-as-the-works-art-design-fest-goes-into-its-final-days>.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> The Works International Visual Arts Society, “The Works Art and Design Festival Guide,” 16.

duration of the festival as a way to “get [visitors] moving throughout the Downtown.”<sup>239</sup> As a way of further encouraging participation in these pop-up events, *The Works Art and Design Festival* offered snacks, door prizes, and also issued “Roving Reception Passports.” Visitors who attended the events would receive a stamp on this passport and, having gathered at least five stamps from different Roving Receptions, would be entered to win a festival prize pack.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

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- Community Gallery: Incubator Series by Various Artists
- Proj-x Room: Party Paintings by Campbell Wallace

**SITE 19: ALBERTA CRAFT COUNCIL p.10**

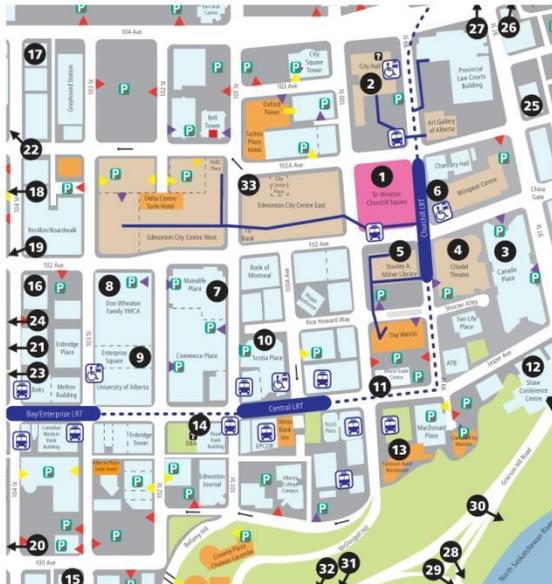
- Feature Gallery: Language of Craft by Various Artists & Wornu Paper Works by Various Artists
- Discovery Gallery: Small Toys by Diana Lin-Jin Cho & Thinking in Trees by Nicole Baxter

**SITE 20: THE MATRIX HOTEL p.10**

- Hospitality Suite: Animal Speak by Daane Melli

**SITE 21: HARCOURT HOUSE & VAAA p.10-11**

- Harcourt House: New Territories by Various Artists



**SITE 22: d:c3 ART PROJECTS p.11**

- The Most Dangerous Job in the World by Roy Mills

**SITE 23: SNAP GALLERY p.11**

- Main Gallery: Gabriela Jelencovic
- Community Gallery: Daniel Evans

**SITE 24: CREATIVE PRACTICES INSTITUTE (CPI) p.11**

- Creatives in Residence by Various Artists

**SITE 25: THE DRAWING ROOM p.12**

- Notions of Space and Time by Catalina

**SITE 26: BLEEDING HEART ARTS SPACE p.12**

- The Battle of Barking Creek by Rob Harpin

**SITE 27: NINA HAGGERTY CENTRE FOR THE ARTS p.12**

- The Globe We Nat: News I Would Like to Read on Saturday Morning Over a Cup of Coffee by Juan Lopezdabbob

**SITE 28: GALERIE PAVA p.13**

- Retrospective: Landscapes by Sylvie Pinard

**SITE 29: CAVA Centre d'Arts Visuels de l'Alberta p.13**

- Various Artists

**SITE 30: GALERIE CITE p.13**

- Land, Animals, People - A Local Indigenous Artists' Perspective by Various Artists

**SITE 31: FAB GALLERY p.13**

- Beyond 54 Fine Arts Building: Our Ancestral Future by Aaron Veldstra & Felt Breathless All Day by Amanda Forrest Chan

**SITE 32: MCMULLEN GALLERY p.13**

- Meditations by Dr. Steven Aung & Lucie Baice

**SITE 33: PARADE GALLERY p.13**

- Exterior Windows: After Hours by Brandon Dalmer

**VOLUNTEERING p.14**

**SPECIAL EVENTS p.15**

**ROVING RECEPTIONS p.15**

**TOURS p.16**

**THE PLACES PUBLIC ART WALKING TOUR p.18**

**THE ART & DESIGN IN PUBLIC PLACE PROGRAM p.19**



Figure 2. Festival Guide for *The Works Art and Design Festival, 2015.*

### 4.3 Theories of Circulation and the “Extension of the City”

It is necessary to consider how the emphasis on distributed forms of curating across various exhibition sites and the notion of circulation characteristic of both *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* relate to Rancière’s theory of emancipation and the role of the spectator. Again, Rancière contends that institutions have traditionally relied upon “the affirmation of a communitarian essence,”<sup>241</sup> which empowers them through their perceived ability to bring together disparate individuals and transform them into a cohesive whole. This inevitably points to a tension between the function of circulation within these festivals and the recognition of an autonomous or emancipated spectator. To clarify, Rancière believes that many of the narratives that celebrate a sense of community building only serve to strengthen unequal power relationships between institutions and viewers by operating on the presupposition that their capacity to assemble collective bodies is radically different from other forms of communal spectatorship.

Rancière’s scepticism of the rhetoric on “community,” therefore, might seem to be at odds with much of the strategies employed by both *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. This is perhaps most evident in the ways in which these civic spectacles attempt to draw festival attendees into a collective through events such as communal walking tours, special receptions and events, and, perhaps most obviously, the timed delivery of text messages through the *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* mobile app. However, it would be unsatisfactory to read these strategies as merely a way to formulate

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<sup>241</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 16.

and maintain a superficial kind of “communitarian essence”<sup>242</sup> among festival spectators. This is because these events comprised only one portion of programming for the festivals. Another important distinction should be made that, while an effort was clearly made to encourage the gathering of groups at specific times or places, such programs do not automatically guarantee the desired results. A significant example is found in the *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* mobile app, which was downloaded by only 300 of the estimated 52,000 individuals that attended the event. For this reason, it is too simple to dismiss these particular tactics and, by extension, these festivals as a continuation or extension of the uneven power relations Rancière rightly warns against. Rather, this chapter will explore the discourse of circulation in these events in order to better understand the significance of this concept to these civic spectacles.

By employing a distributive model of curating that depends upon both site-specific works intended for temporary installation and local galleries or institutions that comprise the city’s public arts programming throughout the year, it is first necessary to reconsider these civic spectacles in relation to theories of circulation and communal spectatorship. Not only do both festivals incorporate a variety of exhibits and attractions at their main grounds, they also provide incentives that draw people away from this central site.<sup>243</sup> It could be argued, then, that such curatorial strategies can still adhere to Rancière’s desire to unfix power relations between institutions and their audiences. The incorporation of exhibits in both local cultural spaces and more conventional, everyday public spaces does not stop at this affirmation of a communitarian essence. Instead, it might be more

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> The Works International Visual Arts Society, “The Works Art and Design Festival Guide,” 4–13.

productive to consider the dispersal of these curatorial programs across the city in relation to Rancière's belief that "everywhere there are starting points, intersections, and junctions that enable us to learn something new."<sup>244</sup> Furthermore, through its various strategies of circulation of objects, images, and individual subjects within these sites, it is worth exploring how Edmonton's *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche* speak to the author's theory of emancipation as being exercised through the "unpredictable interplay of associations and dissociations"<sup>245</sup> that we, as spectators, inevitably and naturally have within such spaces.

Comparisons can be drawn between Rancière's theory of emancipation and the optimism voiced in many of the recent publications on public arts festivals and similar civic spectacles. It can be argued that, by creating new opportunities for artists to exhibit in ordinary urban public spaces while simultaneously drawing attention to the arts centres that operate throughout the city all year, both *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* demonstrate a distributed and networked model of curation advocated in much of the current scholarship on public festivals. For example, returning to the work of Anderson and Mar, by collaborating across the city's arts, business, and civic sectors, these civic spectacles illustrate that the strength of community-focused curatorial projects lies in their ability "to develop platforms for connections and contact between people and institutions."<sup>246</sup>

These issues are also discussed by curators Vince Dziekan and Sven Mehzoud in the article "Activating *exUrbanScreens*: Applying Curatorial Design toward Affective

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<sup>244</sup> Rancière, 17.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Anderson and Mar, 11.

Experience in Civic Media Spectacles.” Here, Dziekan and Mehzoud reflect on their experience as curators of the festival, *exUrbanScreens*, an event which hosted two major exhibitions of new media art in venues throughout Frankston, Australia, between 2012 and 2013. For Dziekan and Mehzoud, an analysis of this particular festival reveals an emerging trend in curatorial discourse more generally, in which “exhibitions become interfaces that actively mediate between physical and invisible realities.”<sup>247</sup> As a durational, night-time festival situated in public city spaces, the authors draw comparisons between *exUrbanScreens* and the popularity of *Nuit Blanche* festivals in order to identify both the social and theoretical benefits of these events, as well as the practical steps required to facilitate a successful and engaging arts festival within a metropolitan centre. Drawing on Bourriaud’s concept of relational aesthetics, Claire Bishop’s social practice, and Brian Holmes’ “Affectivist Manifesto,” the authors advocate approaching an exhibition as “an open platform that offers a range of different types (social, cognitive, emotional) and degrees (active, passive) of participation for audiences to engage and effectively co-curate their experience.”<sup>248</sup> In their assessment of the challenges and successes of *exUrbanScreens*, the authors propose that, in order to facilitate truly engaging and meaningful aesthetic experiences, curators must consider the three characteristics of space: its dialogical function, its temporal quality, and its contingency. Ultimately, according to Dziekan and Mehzoud, these three qualities are central to an informed curatorial design of public festivals, as “the configuration or shape that these transactions take characterizes the contemporary conditions of aesthetic

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<sup>247</sup> Vince Dziekan and Sven Mehzoud, “Activating *exUrbanScreens*: Applying Curatorial Design toward Affective Experience in Civic Media Spectacles,” *Curator* 57, no. 4 (2014): 485.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 491.

experience.”<sup>249</sup>

These concerns for the temporality of space and the notion of the audience as a co-collaborator are explored in Siobhan O’Flynn’s analysis of social media and public arts festivals. More specifically, the author offers a quantitative and qualitative study of several popular websites and the user-generated content that circulates immediately before, during, and after Toronto’s *Nuit Blanche*. This analysis, according to O’Flynn, is significant to understanding the ways in which social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, become integral to festival culture as “a common bond constituting emergent publics [and] a desire to see and experience a city transformed by art.”<sup>250</sup> Although O’Flynn is primarily concerned with a qualitative and quantitative study of data related to these issues, the ways in which the author situates her findings in the context of curatorial discourse on public spectacle is useful to a theoretical engagement with the concept of circulation. O’Flynn’s research is relevant for its argument that social media use during festivals like Toronto’s *Nuit Blanche* demonstrates the material effect of festivals as, in her terms, “a collaborative psychogeography of a shared, diverse, fluid public experience that never coalesces as a single unified narrative.”<sup>251</sup>

A practical analysis of this issue is provided by Huib Schippers and Byrdie-Leigh Bartleet. Using Rotterdam as their case study, the authors conclude that cities are increasingly finding themselves at a crossroads between continuing to emulate a traditional model of museum culture and choosing to be radically different, by adopting the policies and structure of a cutting-edge arts and festival centre. Schippers and

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid, 494.

<sup>250</sup> Siobhan O’Flynn, “Nuit Blanche and Transformational Publics,” *Public* 23, no. 45 (2012): 23.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid, 28.

Bartleet argue that neither model is entirely successful on its own, and suggest that cities should instead “break through the dichotomy, finding a balance between “many cities” based on a joint vision for an artistic future between all stakeholders.”<sup>252</sup> While traditional museums and galleries play a vital role in the cultural wellbeing of a city, the authors believe that such institutions must also adapt and welcome collaboration by using alternative venues and projects. This fostering of partnerships and projects across the multitude of arts agencies that exist within a city, for Schippers and Bartleet, requires a shift in ideologies of art “towards inclusive “cultural rituals” rather than a celebration of exclusive “cultural traditions.””<sup>253</sup> Schippers and Bartleet argue that this is one of the strengths of the festival format, because it allows for a more diverse program of projects, while also encouraging tourists and residents “to move fluidly between traditional and unconventional places for art on their own terms.”<sup>254</sup>

Similarly, George Yúdice has noted that one of the most obvious traits shared by contemporary urban arts festivals is their use of installations and artworks as a means of “catalyzing interactions”<sup>255</sup> through curatorial strategies that lend themselves to the production of ethnographic and cartographic work.<sup>256</sup> This act of “blurring”<sup>257</sup> art into the community, he argues, places the curators in the role of architects or city planners charged with the responsibility of managing artists as “flexible workers . . . who in turn

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<sup>252</sup> Byrdie-Leigh Bartleet and Huib Schippers, “Redefining Places for Art: The Contemporary Metropolis as ‘Many Cities,’” in *After Sprawl: Post-Suburban Sydney*, edited by Kay Anderson et al. (Parramatta: University of Western Sydney, 2006), 7.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>255</sup> George Yúdice, “The Heuristics of Contemporary Urban Art Interventions,” *Public* 32 (2005): 9.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid, 10.

produce, extract, mobilize, and activate”<sup>258</sup> the spaces in which they are situated. Most importantly, according to Yúdice, this reconfiguration identifies the separate roles of curators and artists within this system, thereby removing the assumption of the curator as an authoritarian figure who maintains complete control over an exhibition’s design. Yúdice’s metaphor of curation as a form of city planning distributed among several levels of labour not only suggests a theoretical model for organizing site-specific events, but points to the challenges that inevitably arise between “the architect of operations and the actual execution.”<sup>259</sup> The author’s argument offers a significant contrast to other discourses on urban curating in suggesting that it is crucial to also take into consideration the disjuncture between a curator’s intentions and the physical demands of the spaces they use and administrative systems with which they are working, as in the case with the criticism of accessibility for venues included in *The Works Art and Design Festival*.<sup>260</sup>

While it is understandable that *The Works Art and Design Festival* would be unable to compensate venues for the resources that would be required to synchronize their hours of operation with the festival, it does acknowledge logistical constraints when working across multiple galleries and institutions. It is this necessity for cohesion between arts spaces and disciplines that forms the basis of William Straw’s promotion of one-night-only events like *Nuit Blanche*. Straw argues that, since the late nineteenth century, the cultural life of cities has been marked by a clear division between “the arts of exhibition and static textuality from those of performance . . . [that leave] the former in the day and

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

the latter to multiply at night.”<sup>261</sup> In other words, while art galleries traditionally operate according to a nine-to-five work week, the live forms of theatre, music, and dance tend to dominate the cultural landscape of the night. For Straw, this opens up great potential for urban arts festivals such as *Nuit Blanche* because he believes that “the more revealing moment in the life of urban art forms, perhaps, are those in which textuality and performance are brought together, in practices that seek to endow the former with a vitality or populism that will revitalize it or extend its social reach.”<sup>262</sup>

Straw’s work might suggest, then, that the one-night only structure of *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* may have an advantage over more conventional methods of festival design like *The Works Art and Design Festival*. This is because, as Straw argues, all-night spectacles have a greater opportunity to take over public sites and allow for an increased, if only temporary, circulation of spectators throughout these spaces without the constraints of administrative or operational limitations. Furthermore, Straw’s analysis of the contrast between a static experience of time characteristic of institutions typically isolated from one another and the fluidity of events that incorporate both daytime and night-time entertainment speaks not only to the concept of circulation in terms of bodies in spaces, but across disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields. Still, while it can be argued that the inaugural *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* proved to be a stronger example of circulation than the more well-established *Works Art and Design Festival*, both festivals successfully incorporated a variety of projects that highlight the value of extending their interdisciplinary programming through collaboration with multiple venues and

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<sup>261</sup> William Straw, “The Urban Night,” in *Cartographies of Place: Navigating the Urban*, ed. Michael Darroch and Janine Marchessault (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2014), 197.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, 198.

organizations. To clarify, while Straw's essay enriches an understanding of the many ways in which the circulation of interdisciplinary practices opens up new opportunities for events like *Nuit Blanche*, this quality is not entirely exclusive to this particular style of civic spectacle.

While much more can be said about the increasing interest in public arts festivals in academic scholarship and curatorial discourse, a further understanding of how circulation functions as a central concept to these civic spectacles can be found by returning to Blum's *The Imaginative Structure of the City*. Although it is, in the context of emergent scholarship on public arts festivals, a relatively early text on the subject of urban space and civic spectacle, the author provides a thoughtful analysis on the influence of circulation that remains relevant to the understanding of the current fascination with events such as *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. The concept of circulation, or what he articulates as "extension,"<sup>263</sup> is integral to this text by Blum, particularly in his discussions on space, time, and the affective power of desire through the experience of excitement.<sup>264</sup> Therefore, this analysis will conclude with a discussion on the significance of the interplay between circulation and extension in Blum's text.

In the third chapter of *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, Blum devotes specific attention to the relationship between time and space in the city. As previously discussed in the analysis of Yoko Ono's *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and Susanna Barlow's *Potato Project*, the author describes the city as a composite of both imagined and real space characterized by immeasurable tensions and collisions that situate it within a system of

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<sup>263</sup> Blum, 89–94.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid*, 262–293.

desire.<sup>265</sup> For Blum, this system of desire indicates that cities are constantly engaging in acts of problem-solving, which he describes as “observable discourses on collective purpose.”<sup>266</sup> It is through this engagement with the various questions about the “collective purpose” of the city that the notion of extension proves to be integral to Blum’s work. He argues that:

The collective encounter over the problem of extension can be made observable through the detail of local accomplishments, for it is through such specificity that extension materializes as a problem: the influences reciprocally exercised between the collective and its “environment” is traced in an array of initiatives for rebuilding urban cores, museums, hotels, for the redesign of boundaries for creating corporate mergers or film festivals. . . . Though cities typically seem to differ in their manner of taking such local initiative, upon inspection we note the place of the initiative in a circuit of influences as a point in the transmission for formats and ideas. In each case extension comes alive to the discerning eye (“how large an area does it cover?”) as the topic of influence and the question of how far influence extends. In this way, the mediation of reciprocal influences exemplify, in every such case, the ways in which collective boundaries become palpable courses of action, two-in-one, both local and universal.<sup>267</sup>

Following this statement by Blum, it is possible to consider both *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* as existing in a kind of reciprocal relationship between collective and environment, in which extension plays a central part. To clarify, both events can be seen as a course of action for determining the “collective purpose” of Alberta’s capital city. By occupying various parts of the city and promoting projects that encourage audiences to reconsider either the ways in which these spaces are typically used, or the role they may play in the everyday life of the community, these festivals become a point for the transmission of ideas about what exactly the “collective purpose” of the city might be. This is achieved and made visible through the theme of

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid, 91.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid, 93.

circulation, which operates at various levels and times in these events and is very much dependent on the motivating force of desire. For Blum, the “extension of the city”<sup>268</sup> calls into question the desirability of the city. He explains that “as goods, objects, and products circulate, so do the formats for their exhibition and display.”<sup>269</sup> Blum notes that, while the formats for the circulation of objects, products and goods are often discussed in larger contexts of globalization and diaspora, this particular text is concerned with the ways that these forms of exhibition take shape on smaller-scales and specifically local ways. One obvious example of the way in which extension functions in a more concentrated way is, in his words, in the “diffusion of excitement and intensities.”<sup>270</sup>

Excitement, therefore, becomes a subject of Blum’s work and a concept that can further enrich an understanding of the significant function of extension and circulation in *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. As the author states, “we must explore the city further as a system of desire organized around the search for experience and its continuous indeterminacy.”<sup>271</sup> It is interesting to note that Blum’s ideas on the relationship between the affective qualities of excitement and circulation parallels much of the discussion of Probyn’s work in Chapter Three of this thesis. Again, the expression of desire through the sensation of excitement underlines Probyn’s argument that our understanding of belonging to a place is an ongoing and performative act, much like the “search for experience and its continuous indeterminacy” described here by Blum.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid, 91.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid, 262.

<sup>272</sup> Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, 8.

There is no doubt that these events depend upon this desire for experience. This is evident in the various descriptions of festival goers navigating the festival sites at midnight and the sensation of turning the corner and discovering something meaningful on an otherwise ordinary street, as evident in the statement by Dymont that opens this chapter. The same desire for experience is also echoed in the statement by Rooke, when she describes the importance of “making space” not only in a physical way through the construction of temporary art exhibitions, but in a psychological sense by heightening the viewers’ sensitivity to potential dialogues that such works might generate. Both statements align with this need to, in the words of Blum, “rethink the connection between the city as a site of action and the adventure of opportunism which makes it compelling.”<sup>273</sup> However, it is crucial to note that Blum’s use of the term “opportunism” is not meant to imply a sense of greed or egotism, but instead is used to suggest the desire to “make the present memorable.”<sup>274</sup>

In other words, whether or not such depictions of these events prove to be accurate, they nonetheless indicate the significant role that circulation begins to play in these events from the very beginning. The concept of circulation is prompted and perpetuated by a sense of excitement which in turn takes shape in very concrete and visible ways through the design and distribution of maps, mobile apps, walking tours and roving receptions. The festivals are thus extended throughout the city and encourage visitors to engage with this extension by circulating through multiple venues and sites. Circulation, therefore, becomes a central function of the festival in both affective and corporeal ways. For this reason, it is necessary to consider the significance of movement in Blum’s text,

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<sup>273</sup> Blum, 262.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid, 263.

and how this might relate to the potential for festivals to offer new forms of spectatorship that more closely align with Rancière's work in *The Emancipated Spectator*.

A discussion of the theories of circulation outlined in this discussion of curatorial theory and spectators, as well as in Blum's study of the relationship between the public and its city by means of extension, necessitates a consideration of the movement of festival visitors. This is especially relevant because the majority of the pavilions and attractions at *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* were designed for foot traffic. For Blum, walking is characterized by a significant phenomenological function. He states that:

Being in motion, being on the street, is part of the meaning of the public life in the city. . . . The street is then not simply a space, but the place between domesticity and work, between the idleness and safety of family, and the rationalization and discipline of productivity. In this sense, both extremes of domesticity and work sustain the regularization of time and space of the familiarity of enclosure or containment with respect to those about whom one has dependable knowledge, whereas on the street there is a revocation of such regularity and commensurate dependability.<sup>275</sup>

What is most interesting about Blum's assessment of the physical act of walking, a personal embodiment of circulation, is the significance of the street as a point of mediation between the socially prescribed roles of the public and private sphere. It is his description of the street as a "revocation" of what is believed to be dependable knowledge about individuals that is significant to this analysis of the function of circulation and its potential to reconsider the place of the spectator in public arts festivals. For Blum, the street is a space which binds together all forms of what is typically understood to be active and passive behaviours, which he summarizes as

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid, 267–68.

various states of walking, watching, or waiting.<sup>276</sup> Most significantly, the street also ties these behaviours to the acts of watching and being watched. Blum argues that:

. . .the street is the path of walking but more than this offers the consummate positions for watching because of the traffic that moves upon it. . . . The relentless movement of street life requires relief for watching, for movement punctuated by observation posts. . . . This generates the subversiveness of pedestrians and the transformation of business establishments into observation posts and the reinvention of such posts where they had not been imagined.<sup>277</sup>

It is this conceptualization of the street as a site of subversion or reinvention in the work of Blum that underlines the significance that the concept of circulation holds for *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*. This particular concept functions at both an affective or psychological state through the imaginings of streets crowded with eager festival goers, and also serves to inform the overall design of these events through the distribution of exhibits and programs across multiple sites and the strategies of mapping and audience engagement that go hand-in-hand with this form of curatorial design. Like the concept of collectivization, which seeks to create a visible or recognizable image of community, circulation is a central discourse of these civic spectacles through their varied strategies for mapping the city discussed earlier in this chapter. However, what makes this concept meaningful for these events lies in the relationship between the street as the point of transition, as outlined in the work of Blum, and the Rancière's discussion of the "distribution of the positions."<sup>278</sup>

By considering the effect of excitement that these events generate as a form of desire, and the meaning of movement between and through different spaces and at different times, it can be argued that both *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche*

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid, 270–71.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Rancière, 12.

*Edmonton* propose a new form of spectatorship that, although very much marketed as a social experience permeated by energetic crowds of festival visitors, fully recognizes Rancière's insistence that "everywhere there are starting points"<sup>279</sup> in both a figurative and literal sense. While maps, mobile apps, and public programming certainly aim to encourage audiences to follow particular approaches to experiencing the festival, it is impossible to suggest that such tools have the power to determine the paths that spectators will take. Ultimately, the curatorial discourse on festivals and Blum's theories suggest that such festivals offer "observation posts" throughout Edmonton's city centre through various collaborations between arts institutions that are already entrenched in the cultural life of the city, exhibits that are inserted into everyday spaces, or projects that completely take over otherwise functional sites. Circulation, therefore, proves to be a central and productive concept in both public arts festivals because it allows spectators to discover the immeasurable starting points contained within these events on their own terms.

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<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

## CHAPTER 5: Learning to Communicate Through “The Forest of Things, Acts, and Signs”: Critical Findings from Edmonton’s *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche*

But in a theatre, in front of a performance, just as in a museum, school or street, there are only ever individuals plotting their own paths in the forest of things, acts, and signs that confront or surround them. The collective power shared by spectators does not stem from the fact that they are members of a collective body or from some specific form of interactivity. It is the power each of them has to translate what she perceives in her own way, to link it to the unique intellectual adventure that makes her similar to all the rest in as much as this adventure is not like any other. This shared power of the equality of intelligence links individuals, makes them exchange their intellectual adventures, in so far as it keeps them separate from one another, equally capable of using the power everyone has to plot their own path.<sup>280</sup>

Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*

It seems appropriate to conclude this thesis by returning to the aforementioned quotation by Jacques Rancière, first introduced in Chapter One, as the starting point for this investigation of Edmonton’s public arts festivals. While this case study has been informed by numerous scholars and curators whose work focuses on notions of audience, spectacle, and place, it is Rancière’s metaphor of spectators as “individuals plotting their own paths in the forest of things, acts, and signs that confront or surround them”<sup>281</sup> that has inspired and guided the overall framework of this exploration. Rancière’s striking articulation of spectatorship is, therefore, the logical means by which to assess the questions and themes that have arisen throughout this discussion of *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton*.

As noted earlier in this thesis, Rancière argues that the problem with much of the literature on collective viewership and spectacle lies in a reliance on the opposition

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<sup>280</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 16–17.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

between passivity and activity.<sup>282</sup> This inevitably positions the viewer at the centre of many debates concerning the role of the institution in relation to these spectacles. This typically leads to two consequences. First, spectatorship is inevitably linked to the act of viewing, which has been traditionally seen as a passive state of being. This perspective assumes that the viewer of the spectacle is ignorant to the means of its production and “the reality it conceals.”<sup>283</sup> Second, this passive act of viewing is always situated in opposition to action, and so the spectator is typically perceived as being separated from the power to act upon whatever spectacle of which they are part.<sup>284</sup>

It is this presupposition of the viewer as inherently passive that is most problematic for Rancière, as it leads to the uneven distribution of power between these “passive” spectators and the institutions or individuals that are then assigned with the task of “transforming” them by means of the spectacle.<sup>285</sup> What has made Rancière’s work a key component to the writing of this thesis is his insistence on challenging these assumptions. There is little doubt that public arts festivals are spectacles and, as evidenced in the literature used throughout the preceding chapters, that they have been the subject of both considerable praise and criticism in recent years. Sometimes, they are celebrated for their narratives of inclusion and renewal. At other times, they are dismissed as superficial spectacles that gloss over the very real economic and social concerns of a community, if not worse. However, this thesis has aimed to consider the multiple, if sometimes conflicting, messages that are communicated through such events. This investigation, therefore, attempted to navigate a path in-between this binary: to

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid, 3–4.

avoid the accusation that such events are always all-consuming and stupefying spectacles, while also remaining cautious of rhetoric that emphasizes transformation through participation. For this reason, this thesis looked towards Rancière's definition of spectators as individuals that learn to "venture into the forest of things, acts, and signs"<sup>286</sup> by equating what they see to their past experiences of seeing, feeling and learning.<sup>287</sup> It is this capacity for audiences to observe and compare with equal intelligence as those who create the spectacle that Rancière identifies as a shared form of communication through the practice of translation.<sup>288</sup> Through this concept of translation, it is possible to disrupt the notion of the active or passive viewer in a favour of a more productive means of understanding how audiences engage in these spectacles, and how they are addressed through them.<sup>289</sup>

For this reason, this thesis has attempted to highlight the depth of signs within *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* through common concepts and key themes. Chapter Three explored these festivals through one of the major characteristics shared by both festivals: collection. This became the first concept by which to plot a path through *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche*. In the context of this thesis, the concept of collection refers to the gathering of audiences at specific, centrally located displays. Here, Yoko Ono's *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* and Susanna Barlow's *Potato Project* emerged as parallel works, not only because of their similar staging at Sir Winston Churchill Square, but also through the symbolism of

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

growth and desire. Most importantly, both works call attention to the construction of community. This is significant for two reasons.

First, there is the issue of how these works construct a particular image of Edmonton's collective community. In the case of Barlow's *Potato Project* at *The Works Art and Design Festival*, the image of Alberta's capital city was constructed by drawing connections to a regionally specific part of its history. For *Nuit Blanche*, Yoko Ono's *Wish Tree/Imagine Peace* aligned the city with a fictional cosmopolitanism. Yet, as it was argued in Chapter Three, to end the analysis there would be to suggest that this was the only function of these works. Instead, this chapter remains more optimistic in its assessment of these installations and, drawing on the work of theorists such as David Harvey and Elspeth Probyn, investigates how these works might also be translated by their audiences in more personal and meaningful ways.

Second, this analysis requires further clarification concerning the use of the term "community," which emerges as a prominent subject through the exploration of collection. It is apparent that Rancière is quick to warn readers of the problematic nature of terms such as "community" or "collective." This is where the work of Alan Blum's definition of the city as an "oriented object"<sup>290</sup> becomes important in Chapter Three, because it reminds us that these public festivals are events that individuals willingly go to and in which they participate. Therefore, the concept of collection in this thesis is not intended to imply that *The Works Art and Design Festival* or *Nuit Blanche* has a "communitarian essence"<sup>291</sup> made up of passive consumers or active participants. Rather,

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<sup>290</sup> Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 29.

<sup>291</sup> Rancière, 16.

this thesis has used and interpreted the notion of collection to include those moments when, in Rancière's words, a "community of narrators and translators"<sup>292</sup> is oriented to a particular site.

The second component of this analysis is informed by the opposite, yet equally significant characteristic of these two festivals: circulation. Here, this idea of circulation implies the strategies used to distribute artworks and audiences across multiple exhibition sites. "Distribution" plays a significant role in much of Rancière's writing, and his theorization on the emancipation of spectators is no exception. Using theatre as an example, the author argues that one of the ways in which spectacles promote agendas of transformation is through the "distribution of places."<sup>293</sup> In other words, the concept of "taking possession of the street"<sup>294</sup> by taking a performance or artwork out of the theatre or gallery space is not a new idea. What is crucial to remember, he argues, is that such practices do have the opportunity to create "new intellectual adventures"<sup>295</sup> so long as they do not rely upon this idea of an essential community. Instead, we must acknowledge that the position of the spectator is not one that requires a transformative intervention. It is our normal state of being, learning, and knowing. This is a more productive way for thinking about festivals that distribute art and audiences across both conventional art institutions and everyday spaces, because it recognizes that "there is no more a privileged form than there is a privileged starting point"<sup>296</sup> to engage with these events.

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid, 17.

This is where the comments from Amber Rooke and David Dyment, included in Chapter Four, have revealed important insight about potential for *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche* in offering “new intellectual adventures” and opportunities for translation. Again, while the notion of mapping the city could be criticized as a means of controlling audiences or creating a formulaic approach to experiencing these events, this thesis has taken a more positive approach to these strategies. It does this by insisting on the autonomy of the spectator, which is further supported by Blum’s discussion of “extension”<sup>297</sup> and the affective aspects of navigating city streets. In addition, this chapter also looked at the limitations of attempts to map the city, as clearly evident by the considerably small number of people that actually used the *Nuit Blanche Edmonton* mobile map, which reminds us that viewers will still determine their own “starting points, intersections, and junctions”<sup>298</sup> to explore these festivals.

Through its investigation of Edmonton’s *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche*, this thesis has considered both the potentially negative and positive messages conveyed through these events, while attempting to avoid binary definitions associated with activity and passivity. The work of Rancière has opened a dialogue with scholars and curators who are also concerned with the theoretical, political, and practical implications of public arts festivals in order to expand upon the importance of both narration and translation in these civic spectacles. As Rancière reminds us, spectacles are a shared act of translation. An artist, researcher, or performer creates a work that is, in fact, a translation of their own experience as travellers through the forest of things, acts, and signs. This translation is then exhibited to an audience, which in turn develop their

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<sup>297</sup> Blum, 89–94.

<sup>298</sup> Rancière, 17.

own interpretations.<sup>299</sup> Most importantly, we must remember that we cannot anticipate how these works, or initial translations, will be subsequently interpreted by the spectators who “develop their own translation in order to appropriate the ‘story’ and make it their own story.”<sup>300</sup> In other words, it can be suggested that work created for and situated within public festivals is one interpretation among an immeasurable and unpredictable number of responses that may follow. How then does this influence critical analysis of the curatorial impact of these festivals?

Therefore, this thesis has drawn upon Rancière’s theories on spectatorship to articulate how these festivals function as sites of simultaneous narration and translation among artists, curators, researchers, journalists, tourists, citizens, and viewers. This not only guided the interpretation of this thesis research, but also suggests possibilities for further research in this field. For example, how might the concept of translation help to better understand the festival culture of smaller communities, particularly those that are now adapting the festival format of large-scale international spectacles such as *Nuit Blanche* in new or alternative ways? Furthermore, can this concept inform curatorial practice and programming for public arts festivals in productive ways by taking seriously the creative capacity of spectators, rather than simply offering a number of works that claim to transform active audiences through some form of interactivity? Translation, then, becomes the third concept shared by both *The Works Art and Design Festival* and *Nuit Blanche*. It suggests a means for plotting a path through these forests of signs in

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

order to, as Rancière suggests, “arrive at a better understanding of how words and images, stories and performances, can change something of the world we live in.”<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid, 23.

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## Appendix A: Image Credits

**Figure 1.** Susanna Barlow, *The Potato Project*, 2015. Installation at *The Works Art and Design Festival*, June 19–July 1, 2015. Photography by Lydia C. Miliokas. © Susanna Barlow, 2017. Reproduced with the permission of the artist. Page 48.

**Figure 2.** The Works Art and Design Festival, *Festival Guide*, 2015. © The Works International Visual Arts Society, 2017. Reproduced with the permission of The Works International Visual Arts Society. Page 82.