

Reviews

expected it to have its share of less than interesting works. Yet this was a solid group show that turned deftly around its strong theme while managing to avoid sentimentality. In these times, when less than well conceived

group shows are too frequently seen, *The Interrupted Life* stood out as an exhibition that worked well. It's too bad that it didn't have a travel life to be tested in other cities with other kinds of audiences. ■

Thunder Bay

Juan Geuer

Thunder Bay Art Gallery

Conceived back in 1986, *The Loom Drum* is Juan Geuer's most recent brainchild and his most elaborate and visionary work to date, offering a kind of biography of the North American continent by documenting the natural occurrence of earthquakes. To be exact, 5,500 earthquakes have taken place as a consequence of the motions of

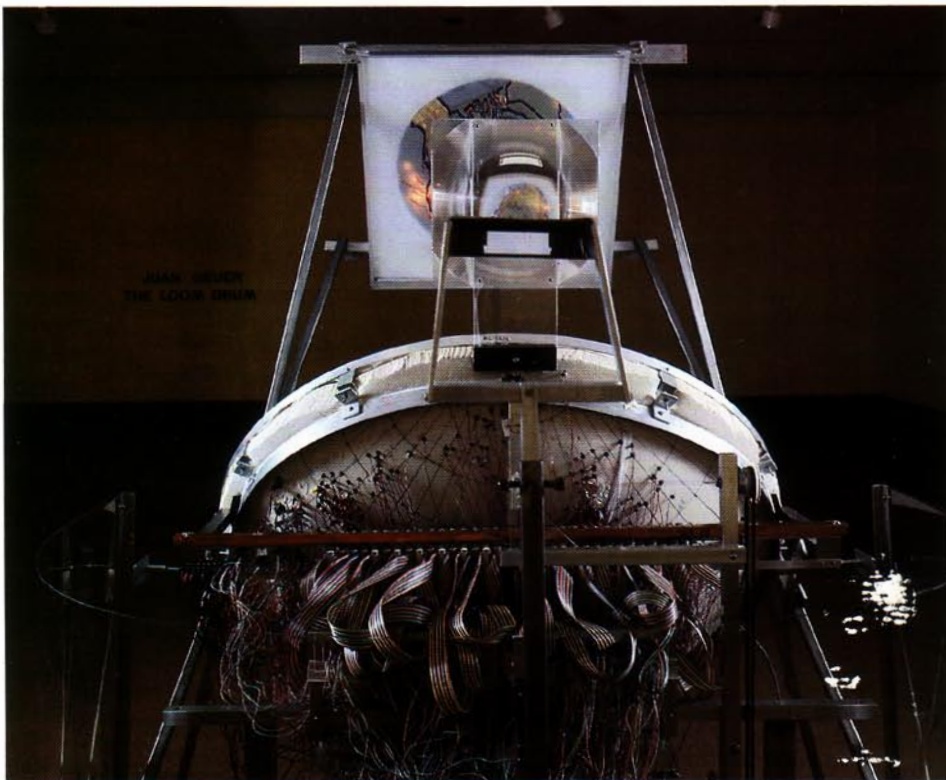
tectonic plates between January 1, 1960 and January 31, 1989. (No registered data on seismic activity was available before 1960.) The drum itself is situated at the heart of the installation and a rotor in the drum slowly turns around, transmitting signals at three levels of intensity to small lightbulbs fastened by a complicated wiring

system to the back of its semi-transparent dish. Within a time-frame of fifteen minutes, these impulses recreate the precise location and sequence of 5,500 earthquakes in 810 different locations. In Geuer's schema, one day is the equivalent of one-twelfth of one second. As well, the artist placed a simple wooden bench at a comfortable viewing distance from the dish, allowing the viewer to contemplate at leisure this most magical display.

On the opposite side of the installation, Geuer affixed a small seat to the work's architectural frame. From here, one could observe the reflections of the lights on a mirror onto which was drawn a modified map of North America. Looking through a series of lenses and a magnifying glass, one could watch the rhythmic patterns of the lights dance in sync to the movement of the drum. A year dial, also visible from the seat, ticked away thirty years in fifteen minutes.

The Loom Drum presents a new reality in more than one way. By carefully sorting and programming existing scientific data from earthquake catalogues, and by collapsing time, Geuer propels us into a different dimension. Viewers were taken by surprise by the suggestion that the earth has a personality of its own to convey, a personality that Geuer has translated into a language of sorts. Through *The Loom Drum*, the earth speaks to human perceptions of time. "If you and I were to exchange information," muses Geuer, "we could take fifteen minutes to do so. Imagine if there were some sort of intelligence embodied in material structures on this planet or in the universe which would be able to express itself to us in a time frame of fifteen minutes, instead of over a period of twenty years or four million years...." It is precisely this articulation that Juan Geuer strives for. His investigations transcend the limits of the imagination, evocatively questioning the processes and the motivations of scientific research.

ANNBET ZWARTSENBERG



Juan Geuer
The Loom Drum 1986-91
Mixed media
98 in. high x 538 sq. ft. overall
Photo: Janet Anderson