

Also dealing with time, space, and the human condition are three installations now on view at the Saidye Bronfman Centre; these works were created by Ottawa-based artist – and former crafter of lenses for telescopes – Juan Geuer, who is now 80. The exhibit is curated by James Campbell.

The most unusual and successful work in the show is an eccentric concoction titled Loom and Drum. But in fact, in a way this piece pulls the carpet right out from under us, for the focus – literally and figuratively – is on earthquakes. The unwieldy industrial-age machine Geuer has created does look somewhat like a loom and has as its core a kind of drum, with one side sprouting tangles of wires and the other presenting a face as smooth and pretty as a minimalist abstraction. Yet, this area is anything but placid, as it periodically

Juan Geuer.

lights up with pinpoint pulses of light. In fact, the work presents a true record of 5,500 earthquakes that occurred in North America between 1960 and 1989.

Of course, such linkage with fact does not make art, so notoriously prone to fibbing. But in Geuer's piece, the mix of science and sensibility is oddly compelling. Indeed, there is something almost visionary about this piece which invites us to contemplate what in another artist's hands might seem like a cliché – the enormity of the universe and the utter smallness of our selves.

To help us concentrate, the artist has fitted the work with two benches on each end of the work. One of these seats faces the white disk

while the other aligns us with a map of North America, itself hooked up with lights indicating major seismic activity. We view this map through some of Geuer's lenses. The snapping noises accompanying each pulse cause us to consider the human role in major upheavals.

What makes this and the other two projects in the show so charming, is a perfect marriage of know-how and the directness attainable only by an incorrigible naïf – or by somebody who has transcended the politics of high art. The Loom Drum is by far the most successful work for the non-sense way it gets to the point, from which all other aspects – form and material – inevitably follow.

■ *Interrogating Self and Other: the Perceptual Instruments of Juan Geuer remains at the Saidye Bronfman Centre, 5170 Côte Ste. Catherine Rd., until Oct. 27.*

