

GALLERY GOING

GARY MICHAEL DAULT

Juan Geuer at the Art Gallery of Ontario

The AGO's ongoing Present Tense series is usually devoted to showcasing the work of young, emerging, local artists. For the 12th Present Tense, however, the gallery's assistant curator of contemporary art, Christina Ritchie, has chosen to present a single project by 82-year-old Juan Geuer, who lives in Almonte, near Ottawa. Geuer, a wholly remarkable artist-scientist, was born in the Netherlands, grew up in the jungles of Bolivia, and moved to Canada in 1953, where he took a job as a draftsman for what was then the Dominion Observatory (now the Earth Physics Branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources). Fascinated by optics and by every other body of knowledge he encountered, Geuer founded the Truth Seeker Company in 1973, an organization whose purpose was to study our perception beyond science and art and to investigate our creative ability for adapting new visions. His work for Present Tense, a mysterious construction called *WiS*, does precisely that. *WiS* is an acronym for "water in suspense." *Suspense*, note, and not suspension. The piece consists of a metal frame whose task is to support the mechanism whereby a single swelling droplet of water can be targeted by the orange beam of a laser. The light of the irradiated droplet is then projected onto the darkened wall of the gallery, where it becomes an astonishing universe of slowly changing shapes and patterns. "Regardless of our level of

knowledge of these things," writes Ritchie in her catalogue essay, "the images that appear before us seem to occupy both a microscopic and a cosmic scale. Like plasma being formed into a galaxy, stars emerge from the tumultuous interplay of light." Ultimately, *WiS* asks some large, worthwhile questions: How can science and art interact, for example, and at what point does the one become the other? *Until Nov. 28. 317 Dundas St. W. 416-979-6660.*

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