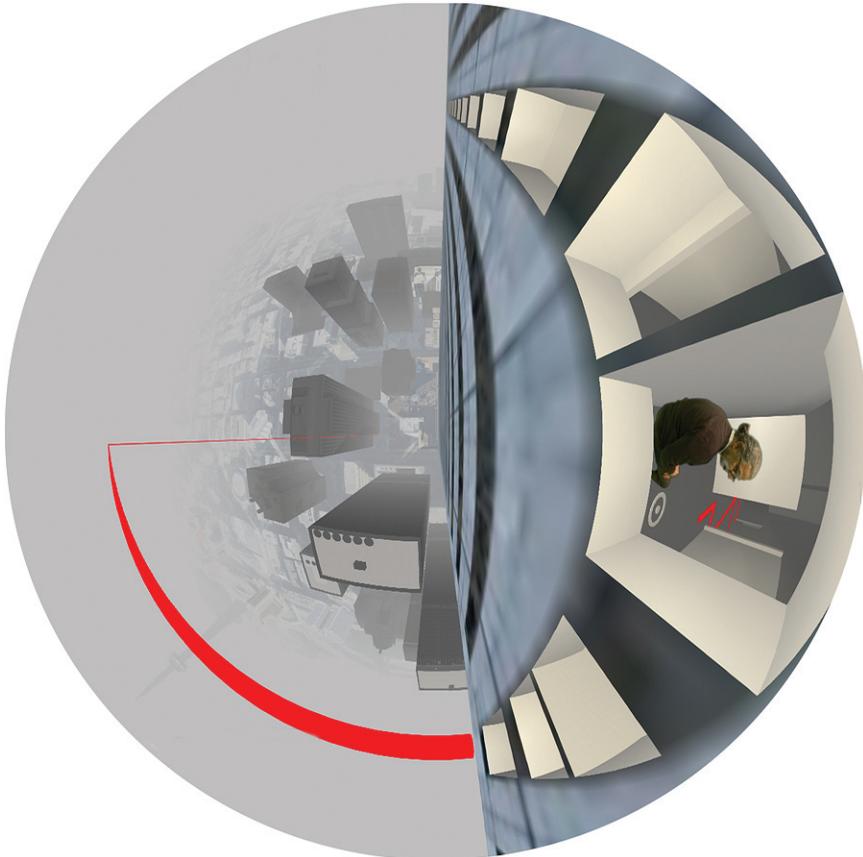


Luc Courchesne Leaps Into the Void in Toronto

Commissioned by the Bank of Montreal for its Toronto head office art gallery, Montreal artist, Luc Courchesne's *You Are Here* installation was inaugurated today in the Queen City. The work will enable visitors to travel in three dimensions within the Toronto skyline without taking a step.



The Project Room is an art space created in 2009 on the 68th floor of the BMO Building. Every year, it exhibits a new commissioned work, which is then returned to the artist. The first two were *All Is Vanity (Mirrorless Version)* in 2009 by Montrealer Adad Hannah, and *I Am the Coin* by Micah Lexier last year. Pierre-François Ouellet, Luc Courchesne's Montreal gallerist, had suggested to Dawn Cain, the Curator of the BMO Corporate Art Collection, that she choose the Society for Arts and Technology's (SAT) artist-professor-president to meet this type of challenge.

"We accepted Luc's proposal," Ms. Cain says, "because he performs a large number of interventions to demonstrate the extent to which artistic gestures can be expressed without being in a gallery. He is a remarkable artist and a poet."

Luc Courchesne created a work that propels visitors into another dimension. The installation uses photography, 3D software and a 360-degree projection system. It is the product of a long thought and research process by the creator of the Panascope, a device used to project images in which the visitors can “virtually” escape.

In *You Are Here* (see photos at www.youarehere2011.info), the “travellers” hold a controller and stand in the viewing position at the centre of the installation. They can import images, pictures or ask Luc Courchesne, in particular, questions that appear on the circular screen. The artist appears and can answer the questions.

Other characters appear, including Dawn Cain and the security guard who works on that floor! They all “move” via pre-recorded photos taken from many angles. The visitors can walk through the walls, enter the adjoining rooms, virtually admire the exhibits on the floor and even click on these works for more information. “When you walk into this work, it’s as if you are entering into your dream space or into the artist’s head,” says Luc Courchesne.

But the most original part is that you can also leave the building through a window and be propelled from the 68th floor down to King Street. Visitors can see the activity on the street and enter the buildings. The virtual tour can take the visitors on a flight over the BMO and CN towers, or even higher above Toronto. The further away the visitors go, the cloudier and hazier the atmosphere becomes.

The experience of being propelled through the sky is also auditory, as *La Presse* discovered when testing a prototype of the work in Montreal. We become aware of city noises, which become muted as they blend together. The further we move away, the more the sound becomes an abstract composition, a manufactured soundscape, and the whiter the sky becomes.

“Fifty years after *The Leap Into the Void*, a photomontage by Yves Klein, I wanted to echo his symbolic gesture,” says Luc Courchesne. “That’s why I’m sitting on the edge of the window in *You are here*, on the edge of the void.”

Immersive spaces

Luc Courchesne was in New York on September 11, 2001 and saw the disaster up close. “I saw people jumping into the void, so it’s a part of me in a way.” When the visitors enter his work, they have access to his visual CV and they can see images of the tragedy, which he filmed on September 11. Having become a photographer without wanting to, Luc Courchesne has

been creating immersive spaces for years. His early immersion experiences at Expo 67 fascinated him.

“Cinema has killed panoramas,” he says. “Why limit ourselves to living within the rectangles provided by television sets and computers or telephone screens? Immersion allows man to be at the centre of things, as in life. It’s a powerful symbol and we have a great deal to learn and feel through the immersive experience.

For more information: www.youarehere2011.info