

ART

Not just a ride from point A to B

L'Art Boat passengers challenged to think about globalization and consumerism

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The beige shipping containers fit right in.

In the shadows of the Gardiner Expressway they sit, surrounded by mounds of dirt and abandoned silos at the Parliament St. slip, a makeshift dock where Luminato's "L'Art Boat" drops off passengers to wander into the Distillery District.

Open the container doors, flick some switches and behold. There is art happening in this "industrial wasteland," at an installation called "Paved Paradise." It's art inspired by its location at a commercial port, exploring the impacts of globalization and consumerism.

A cascading waterfall and the chirping of birds invite a passerby into one. Walking by another causes tubes to flash with fluorescent light and chime in a minor while marine radio plays in the background.

"Things are being shipped all over the world," independent curator Clara Hargittay says. "Our whole economic development is tied to more and more consumption."

The love/hate relationship society has with consumerism is expressed best, Hargittay says, by video artist Vera Frenkel's piece *This is your Messiah Speaking*.

An unsettling, nine-minute film, it explores the "obsession society has for consuming more and more."

Frenkel narrates about a shopping centre experience while words — signed, hand-written in chalk and paint, and sometimes subtitled — are projected onto a wall.



Gravity, one of the works of art at the Parliament St. slip.

"Compare guarantees," Frenkel says. "Ask yourself, is this really the Messiah speaking? The real Messiah speaking? Ask yourself, he said, is this really the best value for my money?"

A couple of containers down, in a work called *Gravity* by Sharon Switzer, a composite of Niagara Falls flows gently, accompanied by the sounds of water and chirping birds. A phrase emerges at the top — "It could be worse," it says — and runs gently down, dissolving at the bottom.

At night, a projector beams photos over Lake Ontario. Taken by artist Gyula Kalko, they capture sunbeams reflecting off water.

"Light reflecting on water also suggests the purity of water and that is just an illusion," says Hargittay.

Luminato organizers had hoped to place sculptures along the waterfront, but that became impractical, said CEO Janice Price, because Waterfront Toronto had already begun to work on much of it.

But for passengers who ride the boat weekday evenings and all day during the weekend, there are buskers and painters on board to provide entertainment.

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