

## Light Attack project connects people to art

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How public is public space?

That's the question that Daniel Sauter wanted to answer when he created his Light Attack project, in which light silhouettes of people are projected into cities at night from a moving car. Sauter, an assistant professor of art and design at the University of Illinois at Chicago, gave a talk at Purdue last night.

"In Light Attack, ghostly characters are projected onto city architecture at night," Sauter said. The characters are person-shaped projections of light and they can appear to be running, standing or sitting.

"It's possible to redirect the sequence of video loops so the characters can move in a particular direction or respond to passersby," Sauter said.

Sauter conceived Light Attack in 2004 and he has taken the project to cities all over the world, including Hong Kong, Florence and Los Angeles.

"It's interesting how people react to it," he said. "The first step is to try to see where it comes from and see if it's a threat. The second step is to interact with it."

Sauter said it is interesting how people's interactions with the images are different.

"Some are friendly, but some want to find it."

A camera records the light projections and pedestrians' reactions to them. After each city's performance, the images are displayed in local galleries.

Sauter said one reason he conceived the project is because he is fascinated by the relationship between technology and art.

"I wanted to see what happens when digital art becomes disconnected from its dedicated surfaces, or screens, and becomes mobile," he said.

City dwellers are becoming increasingly used to public art that makes use of light, Sauter said. For example, the Chanel building in Tokyo is covered with so many lights that "it's like a giant LED screen." A prominent American example of public art with light is the beams of light that were

projected in the shape of the Twin Towers on the World Trade Center site.

Charles Gick, associate professor of visual and performance, attended the lecture. He said he thinks the project is fascinating from an academic point of view.

"It connects disciplines. I think it's great that he has computer science people working in his studio," he said.

Gick said he also admires the way the project connects people to art.

"It's really compelling work. A lot of people who wouldn't normally see artwork must encounter art because it's in their neighborhood," he said.

Petronio Bendito, assistant professor of visual and performance arts, said Sauter's use of technology is interesting.

"He is able to look at pieces of technology and create a completely new experience with them," he said. "It's a fascinating aspect how strongly people respond to it, when it's only a projected light."

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