

Solo in South America: William Jans photographer

Multimedia art show educates and entertains

By JOYCE MACPHEE
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I went on a whirlwind tour of South America last Friday night and got back in time to watch the eleven o'clock news.

The tour guide was the affable and particularly well-travelled Vancouver photographer William Jans, who presented his Solo in South America photographic show at the University of Ottawa.

If the purpose of art is to educate as well as to entertain, then the multimedia shows presented by Jans are definitely art. He enlivens his interactive shows with video clips, anecdotes, giveaways, and fun costumes. Of course you can also buy affordable reproductions of his photographs before and after the show in the form of posters, prints, and fridge magnets.

It is evident that Jans has a respect and reverence for the people, animals, and landscapes he captures and his sincerity shines through. One great aspect of his photography is that he seems equally adept at capturing many different types of subjects. And he gets an A for effort. The material for Solo in South America was collected by taking 19 flights over 69 days, and the show took an astonishing 1800 hours to assemble.

Solo in South America kicked off in Peru where Jans showed how he cleverly disguised his laptop as a book, and made his knapsack look less appealing to thieves. Before we knew it, we were in the midst of a riot of colour and sound in the Rio de Janeiro Carnaval, with vivid scenes of some of the 70,000 floats in a procession a



Young girl and child in Otobalo, Ecuador. WILLIAM JANS/WRJPHOTO.COM

staggering 6.4 km long. Helpful safety tips for travellers were also thrown into the mix.

After the decadent opulence of Carnaval, we were shown images from the largest shanty town in South America. The scene then shifted to Bolivia where we saw women vendors wearing odd bowler hats, and pictures taken of a massive silver mine. The intrepid Jans gamely travelled deep into the bowels of the mine.

There were many unexpected stops along the way, such as the Bolivian salt flats populated by brilliant pink flamingos

and 12-metre high cacti. The tour eventually wound its way to a trek to legendary Macchu Picchu, Peru, which was the highlight of the show. This UNESCO heritage site is often referred to as the Lost City of the Incas and is located 2.43 km above sea level.

Also of note were the spectacular exotic birds and animals Jans documented along the Amazon River and in the Galapagos Islands.

Whether you want to plan a trip to some of the locations in his pictures or just wish you could, his shows are well worth checking out. Find out for

yourself why Jans has a cult following and has been dubbed a "westcoast phenomenon."

Jans, who has had 15 sold out shows with up to 800 audience members per show, will present another fun night of pictures called Tales from Tanzania in Gibsons, B.C. on Oct. 29, Vancouver on November 5, and Courtney, B.C. on November 14.

For more information, visit his website at www.wrjphoto.com.

Joyce MacPhee is an Ottawa writer and editor.