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The best and worst of Nuit Blanche 2015

Posted by Amy Grief / OCTOBER 5, 2015

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After a decade of Nuit Blanche events, Toronto festival-goers know to expect long lines, chilly weather and hordes of drunken youths. This year was no different, with many revellers complaining of high winds, especially by the waterfront. Though, none of that stopped thousands upon thousands of revellers from taking to the streets on Saturday night and into the wee hours of Sunday morning.

Here are our highlights and lowlights from Nuit Blanche 2015.

BEST

[I've Got Sunshine on a Cloudy Day](#)

Nuit Blanche installations often take heat for just being pretty lights without much meaning, but Catherine Chan's illuminated text of the popular song "My Girl" by the Temptations was playful and positive and, though the word can be patronizing, cute. Simple and fun aren't necessarily bad things, especially at Nuit Blanche.



[Beaufort 11: The Cleaving](#)

Prior to Saturday night, the artist statement about this installation seemed rather vague. During Nuit Blanche however, this massive barricade, by London, U.K.'s [Heather and Ivan Morison](#), came to life, overwhelming audiences with its sheer size and scale while also leaving plenty of space for interpretation.

[Beaufort 4: Lava Field No. 2](#)

Nuit Blanche is all about spectacles, and this exhibition definitely fit the banner. Beaufort 4: Lava Field

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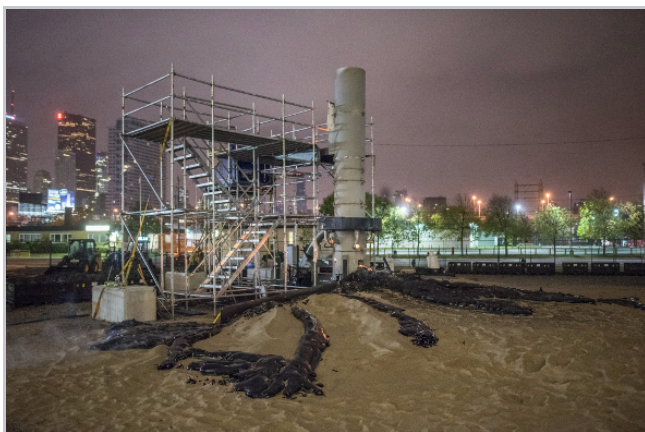
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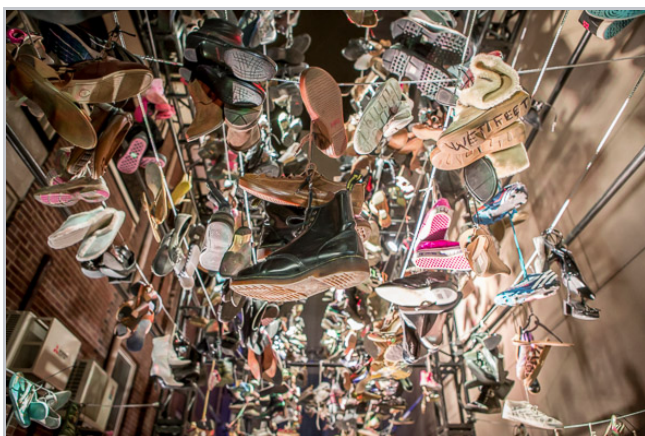
15-11-30 11:17 AM

turned a parking lot outside of George Brown College into a bona fide lava field.



Shoes That Line The Lane

Hanging shoes are said to have numerous connotations, some apparently more ominous than others. But, this project by Canadian artists [Cyril Williams](#) turned shoes into a symbol of remembrance, forcing audiences to reflect upon what certain pairs of footwear mean to them.



Zero Hour

This exhibition by Toronto-based art and architecture collective [Public Studio](#) gave those who braved the long lineup an immersive experience underneath a big white dome, which showed changing weather patterns and poetry by [Etel Adnan](#).



Independent Projects

Some of the most memorable projects at Nuit Blanche aren't the massive, lineup-inducing installations. Rather, they're the smaller ones that pop up in storefronts, galleries and other unique locations.

[Artscape Youngplace](#), for instance, hosted multiple exhibitions both inside and outside its Shaw Street schoolhouse. [401 Richmond](#) also stayed open all night, giving Torontonians the chance to warm-up and explore its multi-faceted space.

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WORST**Wind**

It's fitting that high winds plagued the zone that Christine Shaw curated around the Beaufort Scale: a wind measurement system, which Francis Beaufort created in 1805. If you managed to make it down to the waterfront during Nuit Blanche, you likely felt the [Work of Wind](#), regardless of whether you experienced any of the installations stationed there.

**Lineups at Nathan Phillips Square**

One of the most hyped projects of the night was [JR's Inside Out](#), which has been traveling around the world since 2011. While the installation looked incredible on camera, it was difficult to get the full affect on foot. You also needed a lot of patience if you wanted to attempt to add your photo to the exhibition.

**Yonge-Dundas Square**

Thankfully, the city didn't put any projects near this busy intersection. But that didn't stop crowds from congregating there. After two gun calls and a stabbing, [reports the Toronto Star](#), police tried to clear out the hordes of people who were congregating in the square. However, some individuals began throwing bottles and taunting officers.

Garbage

Those who ventured over to [Sean Martindale's There is No Away](#) can attest to how much waste our city produces. Beyond this installation, garbage bins around the city seemed to be overflowing and many late-night restaurants also appeared to be trashed.





Getting Around

The TTC stayed open late on Nuit Blanche, but that didn't make it easy to get to venues well beyond the subway line. Often times, it was quicker to travel by foot rather than risk getting stuck in traffic on a streetcar. This year, three of the zones were relatively close together; getting to the waterfront, however, seemed daunting.

What are your best and worst picks from Nuit Blanche 2015? Let us know in the comments.

Photos by Jesse Milns, Natta Summerky and Hector Vasquez.



DISCUSSION

41 Comments

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Nb / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 08:20 PM



Putting best projects by the lake and the worst and meaningless ones in downtown core was a very very bad idea.

Bernadine Shelbourne / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 08:21 PM



There was no where to buy food or drink north of College after 2am. Too many things at Queen and University made the crowds way way to large to navigate between 9p and 1a.

Bathurst & Bloor only had a couple of things, they should have had more in the area. Too many things inside with lineups, lineups, lineups.

There was only one artist that I could talk to for the 8 hours I was out and most of the volunteers were clueless, but nice.

TIFF was the highlight for me.

Cool Dude 68 / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 08:32 PM



You are aware that "I've Got Sunshine on a Cloudy Day" is quite literally, "pretty lights without much meaning".

This site is lacks self-awareness to a point that is staggering.

Done and Donner / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 08:46 PM



"Nuit Blanche" roughly translates into "bumping into drunk suburban teenagers all fucking night long." I'm done with NB, its unintelligible maps, its long queues, and its disappointingly loose interpretation of what's considered art. It would be better if there were fewer pieces but higher-quality, large-scale installations. Pride Toronto does a better job of organizing its festival and a better job of managing waste, and security. Maybe SNBTO can learn a few things.

Jamaal / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 08:53 PM



That illuminated cave thing was also weak sauce

Samuel / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 09:06 PM



Nuot Blanche celebrated 10 years in Toronto this year! Is it time it should move onto another city?

alyssa / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 09:38 PM



I just wish it had been more interactive. This was the first year in 10 that I was disappointed. I usually enjoy the fringe stuff, but everything on the fringes were a lot of work to get to in the cold and all looked like

Dan / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 09:38 PM



^^ The "S" in "SNBTO" definitely learned a few things, because they got the heck out. Scotiabank is no longer a sponsor. Dun dun dunnn....

v79 / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 09:47 PM



The large illuminated words thing has been done to death, and "I've got sunshine..." was neither unique, inspirational or necessary. I have friends who've submitted far superior and never seen before interactive illuminated installations compared to his generic was of electricity.

After the massive disappointment that was last year's NB, I stayed away this year, but still managed to bump into a few of them on my way to a party. The exploding wall just looked like foam bricks hanging on strings. It would have perhaps been more effective in the daytime when the lines weren't as visible, but the lighting just took any sort of illusion that they're suspended in midair.

There was also a bunch of idiots crawling on the ground on Queen's Quay in front of my buddy's place. Apparently it was supposed to be some sort of "human glacier", but no, it was just idiots crawling on the ground.

Jay / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 09:48 PM



One of the worse parts was that Malls or building like Eaton Centre did not open the public washroom. Eaton Centre had it available last year.

Rosemary R / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 09:55 PM



All of the above highlights actually sound super lame. I had one good year at Nuit Blanche but that was only cause I made the all night commitment, and was willing to see a lot, and walk a lot. Then I went approximately once or twice after that, and wasn't willing to make the all night commitment, and most of what I saw wasn't really all that memorable, and actually kind of lame. This article pretty much made my idea to choose an evening of mindless American television instead of Nuit Blanche totally worth it.

needsBetterSponsors / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 10:30 PM



it gets worst every year! the best year was 2013 the bicycles at city hall, and the dozen interactive exhibits on university ave. the free swag. what an amazing night. now it's just so studenty.

Lisa C / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 10:37 PM



This was my third time attending, I missed 2014. A group of us met up at Yonge Dundas Square and after a few drinks headed over to NPS. I agree that the installation there looked better on film than to the naked eye. From there we headed west on Queen and then up McCaul to Dundas. Aside from the Eye on the building at University and the dancing things in the parking lot at MUCH we didn't see much aside from line-ups. What happened to closing off streets like King or University and having a bunch of outdoor exhibits that you don't have to line-up to get into?!! We finally found something at the top end of Queen's Park followed by a not too bad line-up into the Gardiner Museum and finally an easy walk into the ROM. The night was totally underwhelming. One of our friends hit the nail on the head when he noted the reduced size of the map which also gave no descriptions of what the projects/installations were was a sign it was the beginning of the end. I don't think what happened in Dundas Square was the reason ScotiaBank pulled out, I think they were already half way out the door while planning the 2015 show!!

Michele / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 10:47 PM



For me, the best wasn't even one of the official Nuit Blanche exhibits. I thought the On Tilt inflatable flailing arm guy dance party at Much was fun and made a lot of people smile.

The list for worst is long. As were the lines. We did a lot of walking and saw a lot of not much. Everything was so spread out, sparse and all the main exhibits had long lines.

There wasn't a lot of good signage, as we circled around looking for some exhibits that were on the map, but absolutely no Nuit Blanche banner or sign to mark its existence.

The drunken crowds, the increase of sponsored exhibits (I don't remember these from past years?).. it felt like Nuit Blanche lost what it once was, or should be.

Rick / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 11:20 PM



Just end "Nuit Blanche" – Seriously, it was an utter joke this year and they are losing their main sponsor – END IT.

Kloche / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 11:31 PM



There were too many exhibits which required people to line up to view them. Every year, Nuit Blanche takes place on one of the first cold nights of the coming colder seasons. People's bodies have yet to acclimate. Why torture them by making them wait outside for more than 30 minutes to get into one exhibit at a time, in fairly cold weather? The planners of Nuit Blanche need to be more thoughtful and consider the audience's experience. I went home relatively early because I just got fed up of waiting around outside in the cold.

Sam / OCTOBER 5, 2015 AT 11:52 PM



A reason now for a big drunk fest on the street for the kids. Art that made me think the "clock boy" lend a helping hand in this. NB is a embarrassment and joke now for Toronto Art community. Reformat by first getting in some worth while installations. Maybe begin to view Burning Man one's. Now those would make it exciting and worthy to line up in any weather. Then have it in few area's closer by like a Park. Invite food trucks and have portable toilets. It was best viewing on video's. Done on NB

Nikki Sin / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 12:16 AM



The renegade parade once again brought, magic and music to the streets. It deserved at least a mention.

Wendy Whiner / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 12:46 AM



A word to the dry old farts out there; just stay home already. Why go every year and then bitch every year? Because you do. Every year gets "worse than last year" according to the whiney complainers here. Is there ANYTHING in Toronto that actually meets with your approval? Anything at all!?!?!?

Janet / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 02:55 AM



What's with NB and puking? I've never seen so much vomit outside of Bourbon St.

ilgustavo / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 04:58 AM



I don't like to stay up late standing on my feet in the cold. Nope.

Cw / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 08:26 AM



I had a good time this year, arrived around 8 and left after 3, although this year the exhibits were spread much farther apart than they were last year leading to a lot more walking and only see about 20 of the exhibits.

My favourite would have to be the wacky inflatable waving arm men dance party at much music as well as the glaciology exhibit closer to the harbourfront. As for the worst, I would have to say the ghost train on Bathurst was very disappointing, it just looked like a couple of bums sitting in the back of a rental truck half stoned.

It would've been much better for them to group this exhibits like they did last year around Nathan Phillips Square and close down Spadina, the signage this year was horrible and it was a struggle finding stuff. The harbourfront exhibits were for the most part the most interesting but also had the longest wait times. I would go again but it's all in good company and intention to participate in the event, and I think a lot of people go down for the wrong reasons which is why it ultimately fails for them.

Mel replying to a **comment from Janet** / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 08:26 AM



Whats with you keeping tabs on the puke on Bourbon St? Geez, time to find a new hobby.

Randy / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 08:28 AM



Some how in other parts of the world Nuit Blanche runs without corporate sponsorship BUT here on Toronto everything needs a corporate name on it for some reason.

Moo / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 08:28 AM



Scotiabank has ended it's sponsorship of the event.

Moo / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 08:30 AM



Pixelated at the TIFF was fun. You also get to wait indoors and there are plenty of clean washrooms.

The film in another room was weird. Not my thing.

Tina / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 08:45 AM

Scotiabank was smart enough to dump NB and I will too. I've been every year since it started and it gets worse every year. This was my last one. Really poor event with a bunch of drunk students and boring "art"...waste of time... zzzzzzzzz

Marc / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 08:59 AM

I don't get why they keep on putting stuff down at the Waterfront.

Everyone that lives there down is miserable and no one wants to go down there. The streetcars stop running at midnight for heaven's sake!

Elena / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 09:59 AM

Thought City Hall exhibits were clever, indoors and outdoors. However walking home by Yonge & Dundas was really scary. Drunken students everywhere and rushing the cops yelling 'Fuck the Police'. Alcohol and the Straight Out of Compton movie = bad combination for Nuit Blanche!

mezimeen / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 10:17 AM

This was the first year in all of the Nuit Blanche's that I didn't go out to, and I don't feel like I missed it. Which is a shame because it used to be great. I'm sure some installations were awesome but let's be honest, it was watered down last year and this year looks like it was the same. And now it keeps expanding and encompassing more and more area of the city to the point people can't get to them, so they stay in 1 area or 2 and everything gets super busy. Make it smaller next year.

MARK / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 10:30 AM

Toronto residents will always complain unless its iconic, as in they don't appreciate art unless it has some form of longer term permanence. there's nothing permanent about any of the artwork that goes on display, so much of it isn't heavily funded. Yes, the city does need to work harder to reduce the number of people out in public drunkenness, as its a common complaint every year. My suggestion would be to have a breathalyser test to get into some areas. I didn't really feel that this year had anything worth looking at, so I skipped getting pneumonia and dealing with drunk kids this year.

Vops / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 10:31 AM

This comment thread is hilarious.

Clearly the most popular activity in this city is complaining about everything.

Remember / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 11:26 AM

Many of the commenters who habitually frequent these boards to whine and complain are not "Toronto Residents". They live in other parts of Canada (ROC) and slavishly follow Toronto news so they can battle every initiative that comes out of this city. So much petty, effete anger, so little time. It's name is Canada.

CaligulaJones / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 12:04 PM

Been the last three years, glad I missed this year. We were mostly going to do the lakeshore, but having spent part of the afternoon at Woodbine beach, kinda figured the wind wouldn't be much fun.

Just like the celebrations when baseball teams clinch, these kind of things have become so predictable and and formulaic we probably do get more out of just looking at the pictures.

BTW, I agree that the large illustrated words is getting a bit worn. Projecting video on walls isn't quite as "hep" as it used to be, either.

jen / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 12:46 PM

I really loved the Beaufort Scale works on the waterfront. The wind storm was awesome and really added to the experience.

Not sure why people on here are complaining so much about the cold. You know you're going to be wandering around outside for hours, why not dress for it? I saw so many women wearing stiletto heels with bare feet, I mean, come on. I was cozy and warm in boots and a thick sweater, coat and hat all night.


Monty Cantsin / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 01:27 PM


hey, you forgot about the brainwashing protest that went down on Queen Street.

Princess / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 01:32 PM

Big problem finding food and drink after 2am.

Phil replying to a **comment from Done and Donner** / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 03:26 PM


- 

Well said.
- 


Rain / OCTOBER 6, 2015 AT 11:04 PM

The map had no description of the exhibits whatsoever, it was all a matter of going to the next closest project instead of trying to find ones that you might like, and even that was a feat.

The projects were too spread out from each other. I thoroughly enjoy art, even just looking at a painting excites me, but I did more walking than I did seeing.

I enjoyed last year but this year was a bust.
- 

Griggs / OCTOBER 10, 2015 AT 11:55 AM

The event is too watered down. Too many crowds. Huge line ups. And the sheer distance between many of the featured installations was painfully unnecessary. Have done NB 5 or 6 times now but the wife and I are definitely going to skip it next year.
- 

Zippy / OCTOBER 13, 2015 AT 11:21 AM

Please make this the last one ever. What a waste of space. It went downhill after the first one, and never recovered. It's about getting wasted, not art. Good for Scotia Bank to pull the funding plug. Hopefully no other corporation will take this nightmare on. Good riddance Nuit Blanche!

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