

[Back to Artists welcome: a new outlook for TIFF](#)

## Artists welcome: a new outlook for TIFF

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The Toronto International Film Festival's new home, the much-touted Bell Lightbox, with its swish, state-of-the-art theatre complex (and towering, pricey condo development), may not be open in time for this year's festival, but it's playing a central role in helping to signal a subtle shift in the TIFF sensibilities.

On the side of the as-yet incomplete building, a towering projection of short, intense works by artists **Marco Brambilla**, **Oliver Pietsch** and **Jeremy Shaw** will loop every night, in, as the festival describes it, "an inculcation of radical values from the intersection of art and film."

To put it another way, TIFF has caught on to the contemporary art boom, and its increasing visibility in popular culture, and isn't shy about embracing it. For years, of course, the festival has quietly run a program of experimental film and video, called *Wavelengths*, and for the past few instalments, has offered more of the same in a program called *Future Projections*.

But this year, to me, at least, represents something of a coming-out party, as *Future Projections* puts large outdoor pieces out in public for all to see, with TIFF's name clearly emblazoned on them. Perhaps inspired by the runaway success of *Nuit Blanche's* overnight, citywide program of public interventions, the festival is, for maybe the first time, an outdoor, interactive urban affair.

The Lightbox is just one; **Lisa Steele** and **Kim Tomczak's** *Speak City*, a coolly oblique cataloguing of Toronto's built form, at Nathan Philips Square offer another. **Adam Pendleton**, a New York-based artist, reinvigorates Jean-Luc Godard's classic concert film *Sympathy for the Devil*, about the Rolling Stones, with a multimedia performance at Yonge-Dundas Square that includes live narration, footage from the Godard film, and a live performance by the indie-rock stars Deerhoof.

With Noah Cowan taking on a more prominent role at the festival in recent years – his official title is Artistic Director, Bell Lightbox – it's no surprise that art is stepping more to the fore; Cowan has professed an interest in the art world for years.

The bridge-building, between the festival and the city's cultural institutions, which usually watch from the sidelines come September as Hollywood takes over, are on board as well: In a generous display of cultural marketing piggybacking, Canadian Venice Biennale entrant **Mark Lewis's** work will be shown concurrently both as part of the festival's *Future Projections* bill and at the Art Gallery of Ontario, while the Power Plant's fall show, of the work of **Candice Breitz**, is part of *Future Projections* as well.

It's fair to say that both institutions would have mounted their shows regardless of TIFF's involvement; but to TIFF's credit, the synergy – both artists work in film and video – was embraced, not ignored. TIFF is the biggest kid on this cultural block; for the art scene, it looks like its spotlight-hogging bully days are over.



Artist Marco Brambilla's *Civilization* will take us from heaven to hell — one of several works of art projected onto the side of the Bell Lightbox for the duration of the festival, which runs Sept. 10-19.

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