



[Back to Nuit Blanche, narrowed down](#)

Nuit Blanche, narrowed down

October 02, 2010

Murray Whyte

Here's the thing about [Scotiabank Nuit Blanche](#): You can't do it all. Truth be told, you can't really even do a tiny portion of it, unless you've mastered the ability to teleport and freeze time and space. This means you'll have to pick and choose from more than 100 commissioned works and independent projects, spread across three downtown zones for Saturday's fifth annual sunset-to-sunrise art festival. I've picked a few works that sound interesting, so here's a much-too-small handful, organized zone by zone.

(Downtown North, roughly west of Yonge, north of College, and south of St. Clair)

Iskootao, Kent Monkman: Monkman, a Toronto artist with a growing international reputation for his provocatively hilarious, thoroughly contemporary retake on the aboriginal culture myth, performs in Yorkville Park as Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, a campy cross-dressing Indian chief who aims to deepen our understanding of glam; a few dozen feet away from the city's glossiest fashion retail — Gucci, Prada, you name it — Miss Chief conjures the beating heart of Mother Earth herself.

Monument to Smile, Agnes Winter: Twee, cutesy family fun, Winter's installation features 250 cheery portraits of Torontonians, taken by OCAD students, projected as an oft-changing grid on the façade of Holt Renfrew on Bloor St. W.

One at a Time, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at the University of Toronto: The Museum of Modern Art in New York made headlines this year when it positioned two young, naked sentries at the entrance to its retrospective of performance artist Marina Abramovich. It wasn't just for show — it was one of the artist's works, which is reprised here at U of T's Hart House. Called *Imponderabilia*, it's one of a handful of works at the gallery, but the overall title is apt: the naked pair stand uncomfortably close for you to squeeze by, which, of course, is the point.

East and West of Yonge, approximately south of College, north of Queen, east to the Distillery and west to Spadina Ave.

Zone B West centres on a sprawling music, video projection and performance installation in Nathan Phillips Square conceived by Hamilton's one-and-only Grammy Award-winning producer of Bob Dylan, U2, Neil Young and a bunch of other very important superstars: **Daniel Lanois**. Called *Later That Night at the Drive In*, it hinges on Lanois' personal endurance; in the centre of it all, Lanois, in a Day-glo orange suit, will remix and modify sound and film loops for the full 12 hours, culminating in the debut of four songs from Neil Young's forthcoming Lanois-produced album, *Le Noise*.

Not to be outdone in the endurance department, Sonic Youth guitarist **Lee Ranaldo** and partner **Leah Singer** commit to the 12-hour performance of their piece, *sight unseen*, a film projection and sound project they non-committally describe as an "exploration of image and sound celebrating the hidden, the lost, the invisible," at Old City Hall. Like a lot of Nuit Blanche, guess you have to be there.

Elsewhere, **Dave Dyment**, a former Nuit Blanche curator, pulls a Douglas Gordon — he of *24-Hour Psycho* — and slows the Beatles' classic rock movie *Hard Day's Night* to three frames per second, drawing it out to an inexorable 12 hours at the Church of the Holy Trinity. And a sure crowd-pleaser should be **Mark Laliberte's** *False Kraftwerk*, in which four performers engage the stilted proto-electronica of the iconic German band.

And over on the east side of Zone B. . .

Just because you can feel it, doesn't mean it's there, Ryan Gander: Yonge-Dundas Square has, in the past five years, become the locus of all things Nuit Blanche, if there is such a thing, and this year it's given over to Brit (and Turner Prize finalist) Ryan Gander for an all-night bonfire of undetermined purpose and origin, they say; that's a bit of a stretch, given the mass contrivance of the event itself, but the open defiance of the civic code offers at least a whiff of anarchy — not to mention a chance to warm chilly fingers.



Agnès Winter's Monument to Smile will be projected onto the façade of Holt Renfrew.

HANDOUT PHOTO

Nuit Market Starring the Toronto Weston Flea Market, Mammalian Diving Reflex: Really just what it says, the installation of a branch outlet of the enduring bargain venue a stone's throw from the Eaton Centre offers a quirky counterpoint to the squeaky-clean anonymity of mass consumerism, addressing notions of socio-economic strata, class and the inherent cosmopolitanism of ad hoc markets the world over. Not surprisingly, it's the brainchild of the folks at Mammalian Diving Reflex, whose efforts to erode both art and social boundaries have become a minor legend. Also with an all-night shwarma stand, I hear, making it both poignant and purely practical. In an alleyway off Dundas St. E. near Victoria St., one block from Yonge-Dundas Square.

The River Peace: The Distillery District will be a particularly active hub this year, with none so imposing as this all-night audience-participatory sound/light/video performance/installation/sculpture. Huh? Put it this way: All night, the artists — among them former Nuit Blanche curator Thom Sokoloski — will lead a procession of peace-minded types in a mass meditation, all the while carrying a 2,000-foot sculpture illuminated by their cell phones. The entire thing will be videoed and projected on a huge wall — of which the Distillery has plenty.

Downtown South, mostly south of or on Queen Street, west of Victoria Street, and west to Roncesvalles Avenue

The Task, Chris Shepherd: In a performance appropriate for the overall theme of Nuit Blanche, this year or any other — endurance — Shepherd will move 15 tons of cinder blocks from one point to another and back again. By daybreak, it will seem as though nothing happened at all; if only the rest of the city, surely awash in garbage among other things, could say the same.

Endgame (Coulrophobia), Max Streicher: Part of Nuit Blanche is simple spectacle, and Streicher achieves this by wedging two enormous, inflatable clown heads between two historic buildings on Yonge St. Is it art? No idea. But it'll be weird.

Erik Satie's Vexations, Martin Arnold and Micah Lexier: For generations of music nerds, Satie's hauntingly minimal compositions have been compelling fuel for the imagination, but none more so than the *Vexations*, 39 beats of music to be played 840 times without stopping. A good guess is that it would take a solid 24 hours to achieve this, so for Nuit Blanche, they're doubling up with two pianos playing it simultaneously to make the 12-hour limit. As they do so, the sheet music for each pass — 840, that is — will be folded into paper sculpture, giving form to the ephemeral. Heady, true, but stop in for a listen: It's mesmerizing.

I could hardly finish this without a brief mention of the project I'll be participating in, way, way out west in Parkdale, called **Speed Art Criticism**. Along with myself, a handful of colleagues like Sarah Milroy, R.M. Vaughn, David Balzer and Leah Sandals will be manning the service counter at the **Six String Garage** (1658 Queen St. W.) to solve all the art world's problems — or just your own — in 15 minutes per head. Not sure if you're a misunderstood genius, or just no darn good? We'll set you straight. We're doing shifts, and I'm mercifully on the early one. Do come down and say hi.

For complete details of Saturday's Nuit Blanche, visit www.scotiabanknuitblanche.ca. Murray Whyte blogs about the art scene at www.thestar.blogs.com/untitled.