

Dabkowski, Colin, "13 highlights from Nuit Blanche," *Buffalo.com*, October 6, 2014

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## 13 highlights from Nuit Blanche

By Colin Dabkowski, on Sunday, October 5, 2014



The star attraction of Nuit Blanche, the annual all-night art festival at which Buffalo artists took center stage on Saturday night, is the City of Toronto itself.

Because the night featured so many projects -- from otherworldly sounds emanating from the ruins of a demolished parking garage to a spread of intense, rainbow-colored lasers shooting across the city from the observation deck of the CN Tower -- a walk anywhere within the downtown core yielded a dizzying series of encounters with beauty or wonder.

After taking in a few installations or performances, the entire city begins to open up for inspection.

You start to wonder what's art and what's not -- whether that extraordinary piece of architecture had just popped up tonight, or whether a sprinkler system gone haywire on Front Street near the train tracks was in fact part of some semi-secretive art installation. After seeing a few dozen of them, you stopped caring where the festival ended and where the city began.

In the same way that John Cage's work opened listeners' ears to the natural rhythms and cadences of their surroundings, Nuit Blanche and other city-wide visual arts events serve to make festivalgoers more attuned to the visual beauty and intrigue that surrounds us every day. This is the central use of art: to jolt us into recognition of what surrounds us, to heighten our awareness of the world, to feed our curiosity.

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So in my book, the city itself took top billing. But here are 10 individual installations and projects that struck me as particularly inspired:

"Split Chorale for Vijo Revelle," Kathryn Andrews and Scott Benzel

Toronto's City Hall, designed by the Finnish architect Vijo Revelle, is one of the most spectacular civic buildings in North America. Most people know it by its two central curvilinear towers, which look like something out of Stark Trek. But the inside of the building also holds its own fascinating architectural accomplishments, one of which, the building's central column, was the focal point of a subtle but moving vocal performance by Los Angeles-based artists Kathryn Andrews and Scott Benzel.

As part of the piece, the column served as a 360-degree screen for a projection featuring choral singers. Aligned along the circular balcony were actual tuxedoed choral singers, who took turns singing meditative hums that reverberated through the space.

While I was there, a couple of young men who had come to see the show took the opportunity to sit in front of the column and meditate, which probably would have pleased the artists very much.