

## NUIT BLANCHE



Photography: Ashlea Wessel

Neil Young starred in Daniel Lanois' Nuit Blanche film project *Later That Night at the Drive-In*.

### **Nuit Blanche 2010 review**

BY DAVID BALZER October 04, 2010 11:10

It would be an overstatement to call it a culture war but, really, on this, the fifth anniversary of Nuit Blanche, it's very clear that there are always going to be two factions on the all-night art event: one in search of stimulating art and one in search of fun, arty or not, with the latter obviously and significantly outnumbering the former. And so, to the high-minded and multiply-degreed (and this includes many who run and curate the event), I say: deal with the fact that subtlety is not often going to come into play here. And to the masses out to drink, drug and look at twinkling pretty things: deal with the fact that Nuit Blanche exists as a venue for those weirdoes you brushed past in high school who chose careers making shit you don't get. We all like extended liquor licenses so, yeah, get over it. It is what it is.

Given that the city doesn't seem to want to pare down its offerings, the ideal Nuit Blanche experience, for the stimulating-art seekers, must be predicated on judicious selection. You cannot see everything, nor can you hop on your bike and wander around until the magic hits you. If I hadn't been tasked with covering the event, and if I had been in a particularly cerebral mood, I might simply have chosen to attend [Sarah Robayo Sheridan's Reunion](#), skipping over to Micah Lexier and Martin Arnold's *Vexations* later on. But, as it was, I had to see lots, and was, frankly, and probably as a result of this, not terribly in the mood for deep consideration of various avant-garde paradigms. That option was there, however, and we should all be glad for it.

And so it doesn't take a lot of divining to know what I was looking for: ye olde Horatian standby,

fun and smart, in hopes of uniting and understanding the interests of those two aforementioned factions. Easier said than done, especially with the considerable difficulties presented by crowds, zoning and whatnot. I didn't come close to seeing everything, but some of my gambles paid off in Zones B and C, these three being unquestionable standouts:

[Mammalian Diving Reflex](#)'s Nuit Market Starring the [Toronto Weston Flea Market](#): It didn't come as a surprise that MDR, responsible for the two best Nuit Blanche projects in years past, Slow Dance With Teacher and Ballroom Dancing, had the best project of the evening. Situated in Victoria Street Lane, just off the throng-choked Yonge-Dundas Square, the Nuit Market brought vendors from Toronto Weston Flea Market downtown. The result was a raucous and provocative: an immersive culture-and-class clash with great food and cheap underwear.

Derek Liddington's Allegory for a Rock Opera: He did something similar for The Power Ball but I missed it: two opera-singing androgynes, dandily dressed, situated in a plywood box and separated by a wall, sing longingly to each other. Here, the box was fibreglass, a cotton-candy pink, and there were, apparently, tones of Bruce Springsteen. I didn't recognize them, but the kitschy romanticism of the thing, situated just beyond Hard Rock Café (and right next to Nuit Market, thankfully), was surreal, flaming and titillating. I'm looking forward to Liddington's November show at Clark & Faria.

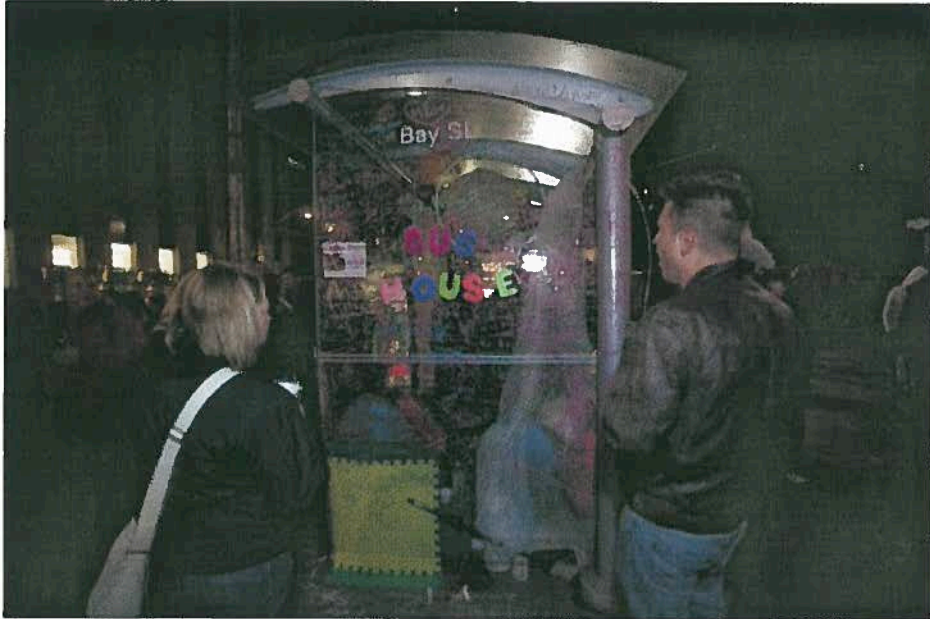
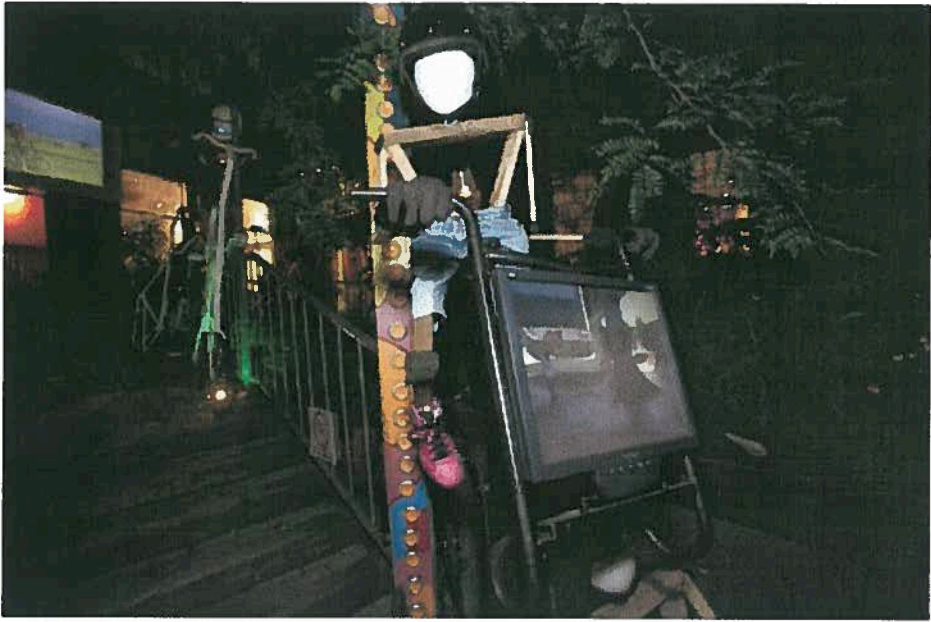
Colin Geddes' Grindbox!: A friend texted me, as I froze on the observation deck at City Hall, looking down at Daniel Lanois' OK installation, that "Grindbox is the best. The best thing." I already had a hunch about that, and was not disappointed: TIFF Midnight Madness programmer Colin Geddes' hours-long montage (on celluloid!) of exploitation trailers was sequenced with a savant's finesse. I nearly cried when I left, begrudgingly admitting to myself that I was working and the clock was ticking. There was no reason other than that not to stay, even for a repetition of the three-hour loop. Brilliant entertainment, and also in a warm, new building.

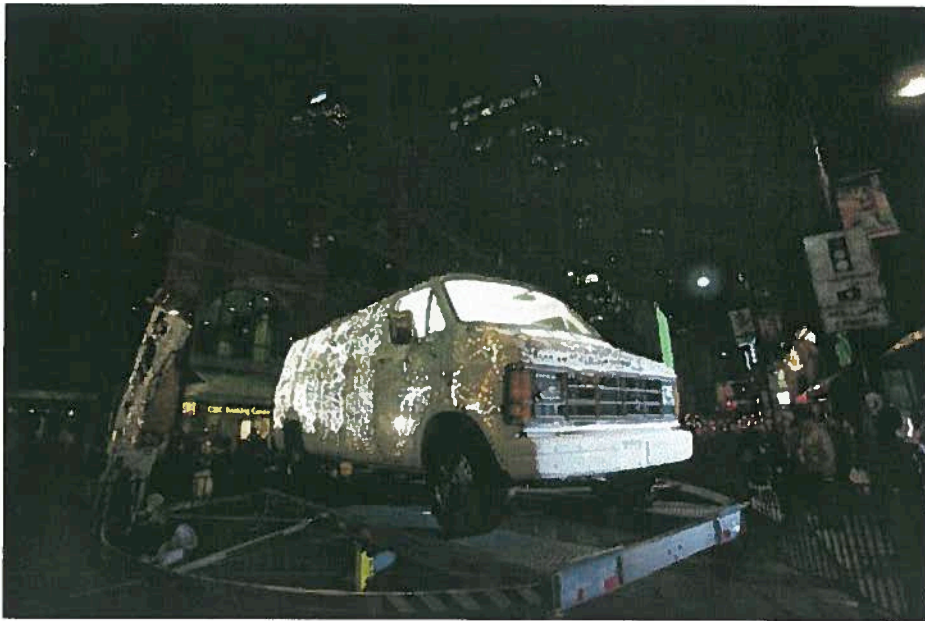
There you have it. Zone A was my most thorough visit, and pretty much a colossal waste of time. My press pass allowed me to jump queues (not as much of a time-saver as one might think), and so I got to go to [the Bay Street ghost station](#) to see Daan Roosegaarde's Interactive Landscape Dune and was completely disappointed with the cheap-looking plastic tendrils topped with motion-sensitive LED buds that lined only a small portion of the platform — but nowhere near as disappointed as those who had to wait an hour to get in. Seriously, it seemed for a moment as if a riot might erupt.

Why we need to import Roosegaarde, a Dutch artist, to do something so simple, and something at which a local, lesser-known artist would try much harder, is beyond me — but I've articulated this in [past Nuit Blanche reports](#). My night ended in front of a bonfire in Trinity Bellwoods: it was locals Claire Ironside, Angela Iarocci and Jeremy G. Cox's A Night at the Round Table, but it was just a bonfire to my weary, finger- and toe-frozen soul. And it was more than enough.

MORE SCENES FROM THE NUIT THAT WAS







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