

Nuit Blanche makes art accessible in public spaces

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Saskatoon Express

Nuit Blanche Saskatoon is celebrating its fifth birthday. The annual free, all-ages nighttime arts festival, which is now in its fifth year, is scheduled for Sept. 29 from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. The eclectic celebration of art and culture will bring contemporary art into public spaces, highlighting 21 projects in the city's Broadway, downtown and River Landing areas.

The event encourages people to explore areas of the city they may not regularly traverse during their day-to-day lives and to see Saskatoon in a new light, bringing art into locations such as alleyways.

"We're working again with local businesses and organizations to host projects in public spaces," said organizer Michael Peterson. "As always, there's a continued focus on accessibility, bringing art to public space to break down some of the barriers for people to see, and experience, contemporary art and local art."

Chris Morin is one of the local artists whose work, titled *Never Gonna GIF You Up*, will be showcased at Nuit Blanche Saskatoon. Located in the alley behind Brainsport, at 616 10th St. East, the interactive photo booth project will consist of 50 short GIFs projected onto a blank concrete wall, looped in intervals of 30 seconds each.

Morin, who previously lived in Montreal, said Nuit Blanche was the "party of the year" in that city, noting the community "came alive from dusk until dawn, and every spectacle was an impressive display of light, sound and whimsy." He's now excited to take on the role of a featured artist at Saskatoon's festival.

"When I moved back to Saskatoon, I jumped at the chance to become a founding board member of Nuit Blanche, helping to launch this festival in Riversdale," said Morin.

"Several years later, I'm super excited to take on the role of a featured artist — circle complete? Events such as Nuit Blanche help make art installations more accessible to the public, and literally put the artists in the streets to mingle alongside the spectacle. And every year there's a palpable excitement in the air that's equal parts curiosity and jubilation — how cool is that?"

A wide variety of other projects and performers will be showcased during Nuit Blanche, including the Indigenous Poets Society, a collective of Plains Cree poets based on Treaty Six Territory in Saskatoon. The group's members include Kevin Wesaquate, Shawn Joseph, Janelle Pewapis-

Kevin Wesaquate is a member of the Indigenous Poets Society. (Photo: Andrea An @ Nolita Studios 2017)



conias and Lindsay Knight, and the collective is set to perform at the River Landing amphitheatre.

Remai Modern is also participating in Nuit Blanche. The modern art museum is hosting Rosa Barba's first major solo museum project in Canada, featuring a selection of her recent work and a newly commissioned filmic sculpture. The latest iteration of Barba's *White Museum* project will be showcased as part of Nuit Blanche Saskatoon, when a frame of bright light will be projected onto the South Saskatchewan River using a 70-mm projector with blank film.

Other Nuit Blanche highlights include *Luster*, which will be presented by Sask-Acro at the Saskatoon Farmers' Market, a participatory Tai-Chi performance at the River Landing pump house from the Heritage Wellness Society and many other projects.

Peterson anticipates about 10,000 people will attend Nuit Blanche Saskatoon this year. He said the event puts an emphasis on local artists, often helping them to further develop their skills at younger stages of their careers.

"I think it's important in a lot of ways to have festivals like this, because it gives a venue for artists in Saskatoon — especially those that are doing sort of experimental or interactive or digital works — a space to show them," he said.

"We have galleries and we have different opportunities, but the scale of the festival is something else, both in terms of the number of attendees and the number of projects. I mean, when we're talking about 21 different projects, that's not an insignificant number."

For more information about Nuit Blanche Saskatoon, including an event map and descriptions of the artists and their projects, go online to nuitblanchesaskatoon.ca.



Organizer Michael Peterson anticipates about 10,000 people will attend Nuit Blanche this year. (Photo by Zenja Ivkovic)