

Festival Guide 2023

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Toronto Alternative
Arts Festival

Felt like you were wandering around aimlessly at Nuit Blanche Toronto these last two years? You're not alone.

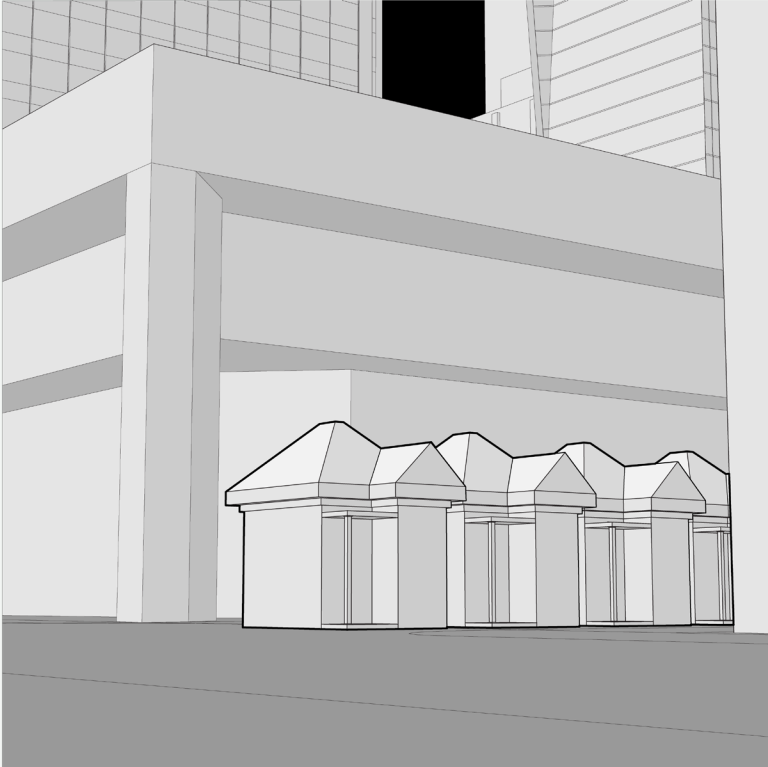
While attending the post-pandemic productions in 2022 and 2023, we at Studio Studio's Toronto office felt disconnected from the intended night of contemporary art. Instead of finding artwork that pushed forward the conversations we have as Torontonians, we found ourselves blindly navigating aimless crowds in the financial district, unsure of where we were supposed to be looking. From the responses that social media users provided, we weren't the only ones let down.

As we observed, Torontonians came out in full force to enjoy a night of accessible artworks. The overcrowding of Nathan Philips Square and the closure of a dozen streets to vehicles proves that the people of the city are enthusiastic about contemporary art and participate in a culture that sees the value in making artworks freely available. An estimate of annual attendance of Nuit Blanche is a staggering 1.2 million in a city of 2.9 million people. Torontonians are ready and more than willing to wander the downtown core in a sleepless night of creative expression. But is that enthusiasm being met?

Going back to 2014, less than a decade after the first Nuit Blanche taking place, art observers began to question the event. Cynicism has crept into the image of the art festival, painting the city-run program as just a heartless ploy to attract business and tourism. The strength of the art has been neutered to serve a larger corporate purpose, and the crowds of people that assemble aren't art enthusiasts, but just partiers on their way to get drunk. Instead of a night celebrating the contemporary art that Toronto has to offer, Nuit Blanche is an excuse to get drunk with friends.

During and after the 2023 return of Nuit Blanche, Torontonians on social media reported their experiences with the event. The feeling of being underwhelmed was, if anything, overwhelming. A giant bag floated around on Bay Street, performers staged acts that were improperly explained, and the concrete tiles in front of City Hall were ripped up to reveal nothing but lost pens. The uncovered Nathan Philips Square served as a focal point for attendees, who summed it up as indicative of the modern Nuit Blanche: a whole lot of nothing.

Torontonians want to see art. They want to engage with contemporary art that is relevant and accessible to them. We at Studio Studio are also interested in celebrating art in Toronto and join in the desire for an engaging display of that art. Taking stock of the frustrations that have been voiced, we propose the Toronto Alternative Arts Festival, which seeks to provide the public with site-inspired works created by fellow Torontonians. By grounding the TAAF with an inherent and specific sense of place and community, the festival will be better equipped to directly engage with the many active conversations taking place between Torontonians. We hope that by proposing an alternative festival Toronto will remain an enthusiastic and creative city.



House-Form Buildings

Raphael Gutteridge

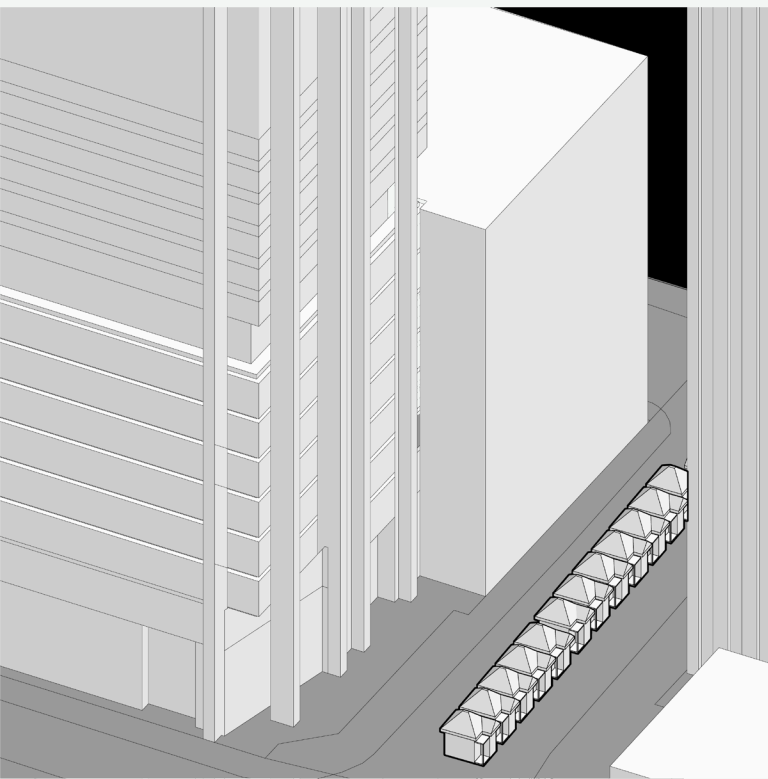
Bay Street between Queen and King Streets West

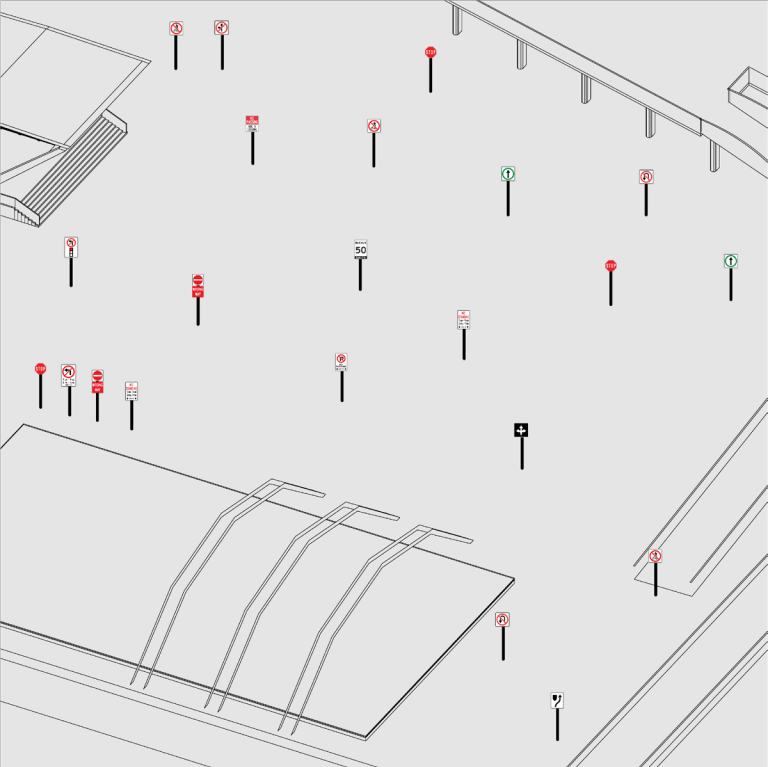
Downtown skyscrapers have remained empty since the coronavirus pandemic but the need for new housing stock has skyrocketed. While some have suggested that the empty towers be converted into apartments, this kind of dense urban living is contrary to the preferred style of planning for the City of Toronto.

In *House-Form Buildings*, Raphael Gutteridge elaborates on his research into the downtown neighborhood of McGill-Granby Village, which uses skyscrapers

as little more than a protective wall to surround an area of height restrictions and building definitions that enforce a certain neighborhood character - for those that can afford a single family house. In keeping with the principles demonstrated through McGill-Granby a new village of house-form buildings is proposed for the Financial District.

The specific designs used for the proposed structures are inspired by new-build suburban houses championed by the zoning priorities of Ontario's provincial government.





Saturation

Raphael Gutteridge

Nathan Philips Square

Is there a saturation point for private auto traffic in an area like Metro?

There is if you want any room left for people to have homes or space for homes. If you cover everything up with roadways then there's no space for people...

In 1966, Chairman of Metro Toronto William R. Allen was asked by the CBC about the future of mobility in Toronto. Sixty years later, in the era of Highway 413 and the housing affordability crisis, his

warning seems to have been especially prescient. Transit in Toronto is chronically underfunded and new projects languish in perpetual construction. New housing in the Greater Toronto Area seemingly can only be built by extending urban sprawl into protected green space.

By covering Nathan Philips Square in road signs and traffic signals, a final concession is made to the dominance of the private automobile. The public square stops being a place for assembly, instead becoming another thoroughfare for traffic to pass through. Complete saturation of the private automobile in Toronto has occurred.