

# Lasers And Giant Projections Turn S.F. Landmarks Into Eye-Popping Kaleidoscopes

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*I write about the intersection of art, science and technology.*

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Light undulates across the Pacific Coast Stock Exchange in "Gloaming" by Italian creative agency ... [+] DOWNTOWN SF PARTNERSHIP

Iconic San Francisco buildings are aglow with festive light displays as part of a free holiday event that splashes kinetic artworks across downtown facades.

Thirteen local and international artists participated in [Let's Glow SF](#) this year, the third time the event has turned downtown into a spectacle of visual storytelling. Downtown SF Partnership, the nonprofit that produces the event with A3 Visual, calls it the largest holiday light projection show in the United States.

Nightly from 5-10 p.m. through December 10, buildings become giant canvases with the help of projectors and a high-powered laser system.

The Pacific Coast Stock Exchange morphs into a shape-shifting multicolor swirl in [Antaless Visual Design](#)'s "Gloaming." The installation "Glacial Gates," by projection company [Max1osity](#), releases the Spirit of Winter from a dark prison of twisted tree branches and blue icicles to bring warmth and beauty back to the winter world. In "True to Hue," by multimedia team [The Fox, The Folks](#), a girl's dreams transcend the clouds in a vision whose vivid colors evokes the tie-dye that cloaked the city's famous '60s Summer of Love.



Let's Glow SF in action. TRI NGUYEN/GIF BY LESLIE KATZ

Let's Glow SF illuminates San Francisco as the city [battles to reinvigorate its once bustling downtown](#). The area has been largely vacant since Covid-19 sent office workers home, with many remaining remote even as the pandemic has waned, and businesses suffering shutdowns and major slowdowns as a result.

The projection event is therefore more than just a holiday celebration, according to Robbie Silver, executive director of the Downtown SF Partnership, which works to enhance the city's downtown. The Let's Glow SF sponsors hope it will boost local businesses that have suffered from the lingering pandemic-related traffic slump—and signal better days ahead.

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A downtown building tells a whole story in “True to Hue” by Indonesian projection artists The Fox, ... [+] DOWNTOWN SF PARTNERSHIP

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Those sponsors, which include Amazon, hope the flashy glow-up will boost local businesses that have suffered from the enduring pandemic-related traffic slump—and signal better days ahead. Last year’s Let’s Glow drew 50,000 spectators over the over the course of 10 nights, according to Downtown SF Partnership.

Like others looking ahead to a post-pandemic revitalization of downtown, Silver alludes to the promise of reimagining a district that’s been a business hub for decades. “Moving away from the traditional mono-economy to a mixed-use vibrant haven is a key part of downtown’s future events,” he said.



French artist Yann Nguema, with Anima Lux, turned San Francisco's Ferry building into a visual poem ... [+] DOWNTOWN SF PARTNERSHIP

Locations getting glowy include 1 Ferry Building; the Salesforce Tower at 415 Mission Street; the Hobart Building at 582 Market Street; One Bush Street; the Pacific Stock Exchange at 301 Pine Street; and Landing at Leidesdorff at 565 Commercial Street.



Panasonic provided and placed 11 4K 32,000-lumen projectors and two 4K 22,000-lumen projectors in custom-built outdoor enclosures. A full-color high-powered laser system drives the presentation at One Bush Plaza in front of a 20-story office building.

“San Francisco has long been a landing pad for artists that create work to shape our downtown’s identity and present opportunities for innovation,” Sean Mason, the chief creative officer of [A3 Visual](#)’s immersive division, said in a statement. “Art invites people in and carves a direct path for more community engagement and revitalization.”

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