

TRENDING

19 MIN AGO

Weather roller coaster expected in Bay Area this week 19 MIN AGO

CULTURE

San Francisco skyscrapers illuminated with lasers and video projections

Let's Glow SF turns downtown into an outdoor art gallery



Charles Russo/SFGATE

By **Dan Gentile**

Dec 3, 2023



San Francisco was aglow with activity on Friday night. A brass quartet played Christmas classics outside the Symphony Hall and diners flooded the streets of Hayes Valley, and a couple of blocks toward downtown, a handful of skaters braved the drizzle-slicked concrete of the city's new skate park in Civic Center. But the busiest neighborhood of the evening might've been ... the Financial District.

Friday marked the kickoff of Let's Glow SF, a yearly winter tradition that claims to be the largest holiday video projection event in the country. Organized by the nonprofit Downtown SF Partnership, five buildings in the center of San Francisco become towering canvases for video and laser projections that wouldn't look out of place at a Pink Floyd concert. Each projection is paired with a soundtrack playing from PA speakers, typically light electronic beats under classical motifs. Lawn chairs make each location feel like pop-up outdoor cinemas.







A few highlights from the launch of Let's Glow in downtown San Francisco, Friday, Dec. 1, 2023.
Charles Russo/SFGATE

The standout is usually the Pacific Coast Stock Exchange Building, an underappreciated piece of downtown architecture originally designed in 1915. Video artists from Italy, Belgium, California and Virginia each supplied short films at the location, projection-mapped specifically for the building's unique architecture. It now houses an Equinox, but during Let's Glow the regal Yosemite granite columns are transformed with the rays from a projector — the columns freezing over, bursting into flames and webbed in cyberpunk fractal textures.

This year marked two big additions to the program. At One Bush Plaza, Adam LaBay unleashed an arsenal of light from 16 high-powered lasers, a show that he's performed alongside the likes of [Metallica](#). Spectators buzzed around the plaza, jaws

dropping at the spectacle as LaBay graciously showed off his setup to those who wandered toward the battery of lasers. Farther down Market Street, the Ferry Building proved to be an excellent frame for the work of French multimedia artist Yann Nguema, who turned the tower into an ornate lighthouse and sailing galleon ship, among other fantastic imagery.



Watch on X

More projection art could be seen on the top of [Salesforce Tower](#), the Hobart Building at Market and Montgomery streets, and a Commercial Street alley (Landing at Leidesdorff).



A view of the illuminated Ferry Building during the first night of Let's Glow, Friday, Dec. 1, 2023.
Charles Russo/SFGATE

For 10 nights in December, the projections give residents of San Francisco a perfect excuse to explore an undervisited neighborhood — and serve as an economic boost for downtown, especially the new crop of 17 pop-up businesses in the area. It also offers offers city visitors a colorful welcome, and a reminder that the creative spirit of San Francisco can still spill into the streets.

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By **Dan Gentile**



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