

## Borealis

### Easy Read Visual Guide



Borealis is a touring artwork by Swiss **artist** Dan Acher.

An **artist** uses art to help change the way we think about things.



Dan's artworks help us to feel

- Amazed and inspired
- That we are really part of the place we live in and the people that surround us.
- That we should take care of each other and of our planet, because it is everybody's home.



Dan's other projects include

- **We Are Watching.** It's a flag the size of a 10-storey building. It flies from a huge crane and you can also see it at the GDIF.
- **The Inclusive City Project.** It's about being kind to each other so we can all feel included.



Find out more:  
[happycitylab.com/en/](http://happycitylab.com/en/)



### **What is Borealis?**

Borealis is a light show in the sky. It copies a natural phenomenon called an **Aurora**.

Auroras are also called polar lights, Northern lights, or Southern lights.

We can only see real Auroras near the Earth's poles. But Borealis can create similar lights and shapes anywhere in the world.



### **What is an Aurora?**

- An Aurora happens when the sun's electrically charged particles enter the Earth's atmosphere. They collide above the magnetic poles.
- This is called Aurora Borealis in the North and Aurora Australis in the South.
- The colours are mostly green, then pink and purple.
- The colour depends on what particles are in the atmosphere; oxygen creates green and red lights, nitrogen creates pink and blue lights. Neon turns them orange.



### **Stories about Auroras**

Auroras have been amazing people for thousands of years. There are many stories about them.

- Inuit people thought the lights were ghosts of animals they hunted. Seals, salmon, deer and whales.
- Chinese people thought the lights were a battle in the sky between two great dragons. One evil and one good.
- Aboriginal people thought they were ghosts of their ancestors. When the lights were bright the ghosts were happy.

### **How does Borealis work?**

- Strong light beams shine on clouds made of tiny water droplets.
- The lights can cover the area of two big football stadiums.
- Natural air currents, breezes, strong wind and even rain give the coloured clouds different shapes and movements.
- These natural weather conditions mean that every Borealis display is unique. Just like the real auroras.



### **Scale and Emotions**

Some of the clouds are very large and spread out. They can hover for a few seconds above you and then dance or run across the sky.

The scale of this can make you feel

- Amazed and relaxed or excited
- That nature is something big and beautiful and we must protect it
- That we human beings are very small compared to nature
- That we are all connected to each other
- That we are also connected to people who came before us thousands of years ago



### **Music**

The music that plays with Borealis was created by French composer Guillaume Desbois.

It has different sound layers. In it you can hear synthesisers and traditional instruments from around the world.

Like the Borealis lights the music is calm and airy. It takes you on a journey where you can feel different emotions.



**The climate crisis**

Human behavior is changing weather patterns all over the world. There are more extreme climate events like floods, droughts and wildfires. None of this is good for humans, animals or plants.

Borealis recreates something natural that only usually happens in specific parts of the world.

This can make you think about the relationship human beings have with nature.

- Are we going too far in trying to control nature to suit our needs?
- Will the natural world stop existing one day and will we have to recreate it artificially?



**Immersive artworks**

Borealis is called immersive because it is all around and above us. We are actually under the lights but it can feel as if we have dived into them.

If you can, it's nice to lie right back as you enjoy the show.



**Where has Borealis travelled?**

Borealis has travelled to many cities in countries such as Australia, France, Germany, Switzerland, Japan and Romania.



People have watched Borealis in parks, city squares and over water. It looks very different everywhere it goes.

Do you already know the space in which you are seeing it?

If so, you can think about how you feel in this space during the show. It is probably different to how you feel about it at other times during the day.

If not, you could go back to the space one day when Borealis is not there.

It's the same space. But our relationship with it and with the people around us there can feel very different.

**Find out more**

See more photos and videos of Borealis here:

[happycitylab.com/en/project/borealis-touring/](http://happycitylab.com/en/project/borealis-touring/)