

MAD.
SQ.
ART 2008.
RAFAEL
LOZANO-HEMMER
PULSE PARK

October 24 to November 17, 2008
Madison Square Park
Presented by the Madison Square Park Conservancy



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FOREWORD.

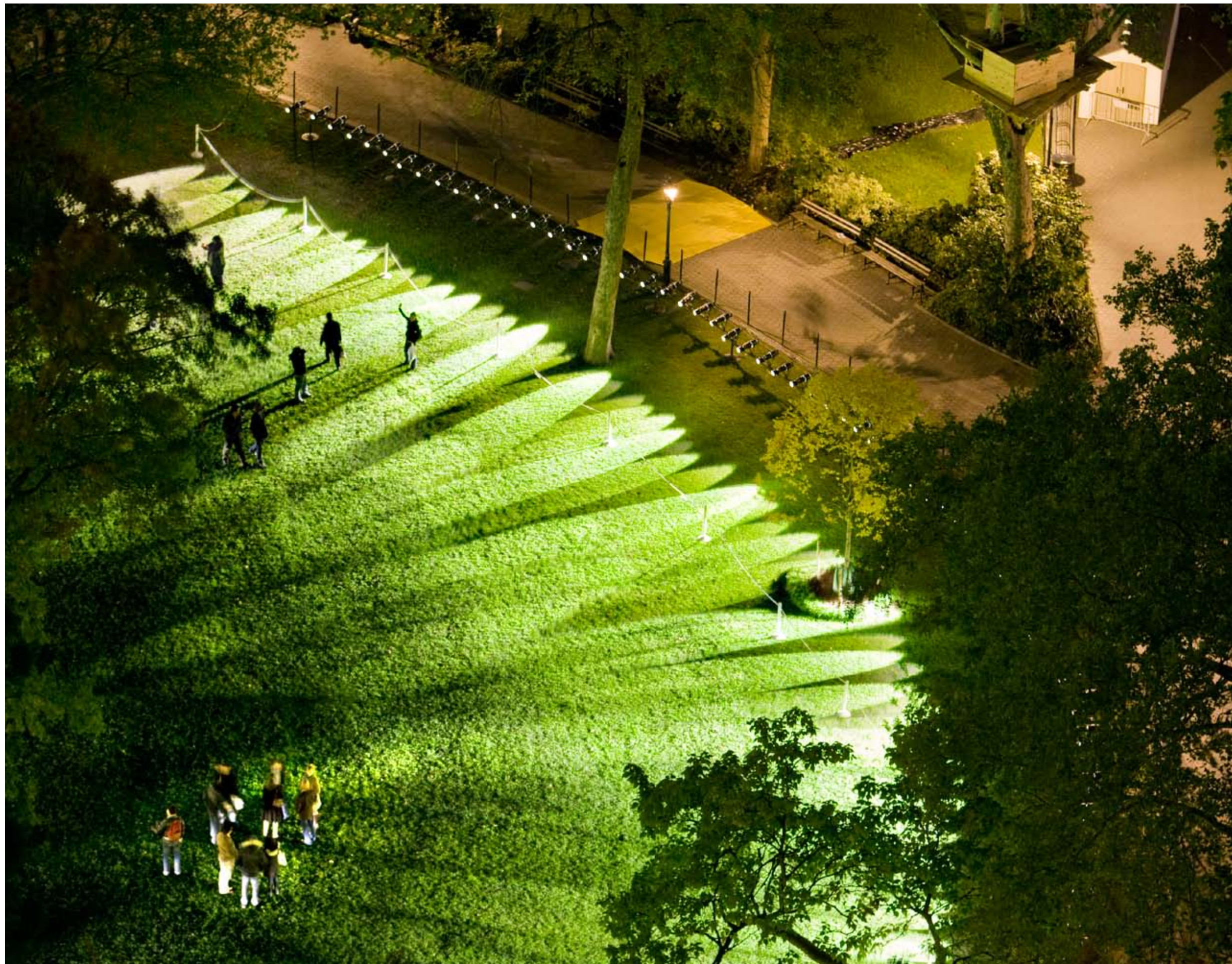
Since 2004, Mad. Sq. Art has delighted and amazed as only a young and thriving public art program can. Thanks to the wisdom of our advisors, the creativity of our artists and the support of our community, we have had the pleasure of witnessing artists both world-renowned and emerging capture the public's imagination and leave their imprint on the park. After four years that saw us exhibit everything from sculpture to sound, video to site-specific installation, it was tempting to think we had seen every possible permutation of contemporary art in Madison Square Park. One of the joys of Mad. Sq. Art, however, is its endless capacity to surprise and inspire, to bring community together and broaden our horizons to the potential of public art. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is an artist who perfectly exemplifies exactly these kinds of wonderful possibilities with his interactive light installation *Pulse Park*.

Rafael was introduced to us by our expert committee of advisors, particularly by Martin Friedman and John Hanhardt, whose eloquent and insightful essay appears in this catalogue. A perpetual font of good ideas, the Mad. Sq. Art committee is forever pursuing ways to add new dimensions to the park's artistic repertoire. In Rafael, they saw an artist who used the latest in digital technology to create spectacular transient environments; installations meant to be not simply witnessed but experienced, ones that brought people together through their dependence on participation. As thrilling as it was to feel Madison Square Park crackle with energy and anticipation on the opening night of *Pulse Park*, more gratifying yet were the lines that formed night after night, in good weather and bad, of excited visitors eager to add their heartbeat to Rafael's beautiful architecture of light and movement.

For helping to make *Pulse Park* a reality, we owe our gratitude to the board of trustees of the Madison Square Park Conservancy who have supported the development of our free gallery without walls, as well as our esteemed Mad. Sq. Art advisory committee. Of course, none of this would be possible without the generosity of our donors, in particular Agnes Gund, Jill & Peter Kraus, The Leucadia Foundation, The Toby D. Lewis Trust and The Henry Luce Foundation for their commitment to Mad. Sq. Art, as well as the Fundación/Colección Jumex for their sponsorship of *Pulse Park* and Haunch of Vension, bitforms gallery nyc, Galería OMR, Galerie Guy Bärtschi and the Speyer Family Foundation for so generously providing additional project support.

Pulse Park was Rafael's first public art project in the United States, but I think it is safe to predict that it will not be his last. After getting to know him—his brilliance, his generosity, his infectious enthusiasm—I can speak for the entire Mad. Sq. Park family when I say we await his future successes with an eagerness borne of friendship and a great deal of pride.

Debbie Landau
President



IN THE EVENT: THE ART OF RAFAEL LOZANO- HEMMER.

by John Hanhardt

The cinema, the electronic media of video and television, digital, internet, and interactive technologies have come to dominate our global media culture. What began at the dawn of the last millennium with the invention of the cinema has advanced quickly and impacted all of the arts as artists explore different strategies for storytelling and recording and interpreting the world around them. The uncanny power of the moving image took hold of the public imagination as people marveled at how everyday life appears “larger than life” on the screen. As the proliferation of contemporary reality television suggests, we are fascinated by the possibility of looking inside other lives to understand who we are as human beings. As people walk along 23rd Street today, they talk on cell phones, text-message on their Blackberries, and stop to record still and moving images of their private selves and public fantasies, which they can transmit to friends and strangers anywhere in the world.

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s extraordinary installation *Pulse Park*, commissioned for Madison Square Park, gives us a new aesthetic experience that opens up for contemplation the public sphere of New York City. His work engages people from all walks of life, allowing the spectator intimate contact with a world that feels natural and not abstractly removed from our primary sense experiences. An artwork may tell us something about ourselves by connecting us to ancient myths or contemporary stories and places we know, or it may be a formal work of abstraction that brings us directly into contact with the materials the artist is using and the compositional strategies and textual qualities of the image. As we read a novel or poem, watch a film, play, or dance, we become aware of shared beliefs (or differences), a cathartic experience that releases us from



the pressures of our daily routines. We hope to experience insights into our lives and the biological and cultural spaces we inhabit. Lozano-Hemmer's projects offer a powerful and compelling reinterpretation of public art. They are not about remaking the art of the past but rather about creating an event, developed through new instruments, that gives all who participate insight into themselves and their bodies in relation to the other viewers.

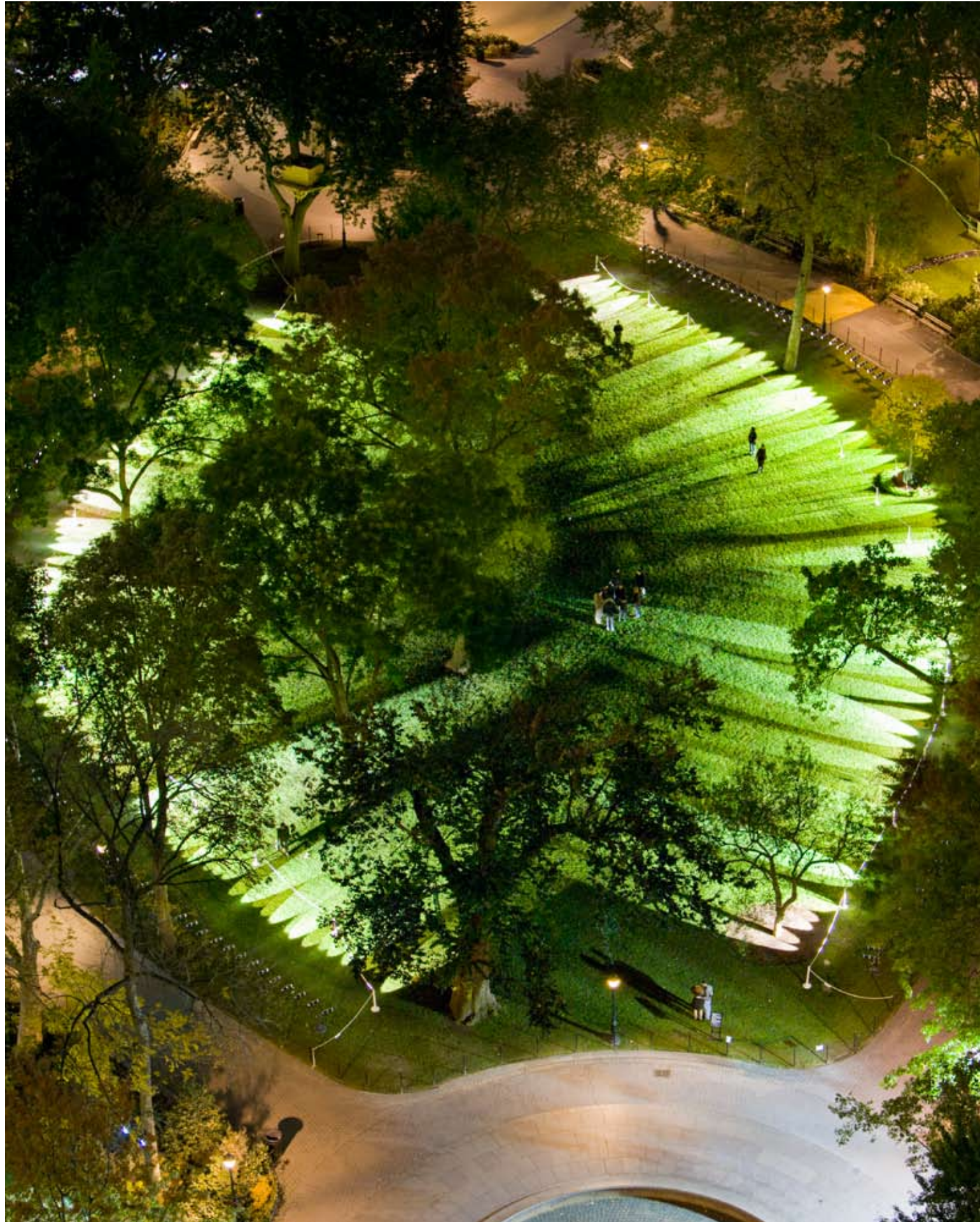
The challenge to artists who appropriate new technologies is to discover ways to fashion them into instruments that the artist controls. One can trace through all of Lozano-Hemmer's major projects, including *Body Movies* (2001), *Pulse Room* (2006), and *Pulse Park*, an exploration of how we experience and sense our bodies within public spaces. The artist sets into motion lights, images, and sounds that reflect our position and our relationship to others sharing the environment with us. Lozano-Hemmer links our entire sensory being to the world, creating cybernetic stages of experience that establish a new ecology of art making. This is radically different from an earlier generation of interactive art, which can be characterized largely by the stimulus-response model. In other words, one does something—pushes a button or turns a dial—and something happens, a loud noise is heard or an image suddenly appears and changes. As amusing as this can be, it is often too predetermined, or preprogrammed by the artist, so that what happens feels curiously unsatisfying and static when repeated. Art should not exhaust itself in one viewing. There should be pleasures and insights with each new experience of the work. Lozano-Hemmer avoids falling into

this cognitive trap by making his work subtle and expansive, as well as responsive to each individual viewer's transaction. The artwork comes to life and is renewed by everyone who engages it.

Pulse Park, created for Madison Square Park, is one of a series of large-scale installations that Lozano-Hemmer has created for public spaces in cities around the world. He is at the vanguard of artists creating a new dimension of bodily experience through a sophisticated and complex manipulation of computer-controlled interactive technologies. The public artworks also fulfill what I see as Lozano-Hemmer's creative goal to fashion an experience that is both a private and public. He places each person into an event that is experienced by many others at the same time establishing a place of renewal and empowerment through reflection. Lozano-Hemmer achieves this by returning to a phenomenology of bodily perception, asking us to become aware of ourselves by renewing our senses as cognitive instruments, not as passive receptors. "We can glance with the whole body—just as we can feel the glance or gaze of the other with the same whole body," ¹ observes Edward S. Casey in his phenomenological study *The World at a Glance*. In Lozano-Hemmer's work, we experience with and through our whole body; this is not a reductive tactic but an opening up of ourselves to an enlarged sensory experience.

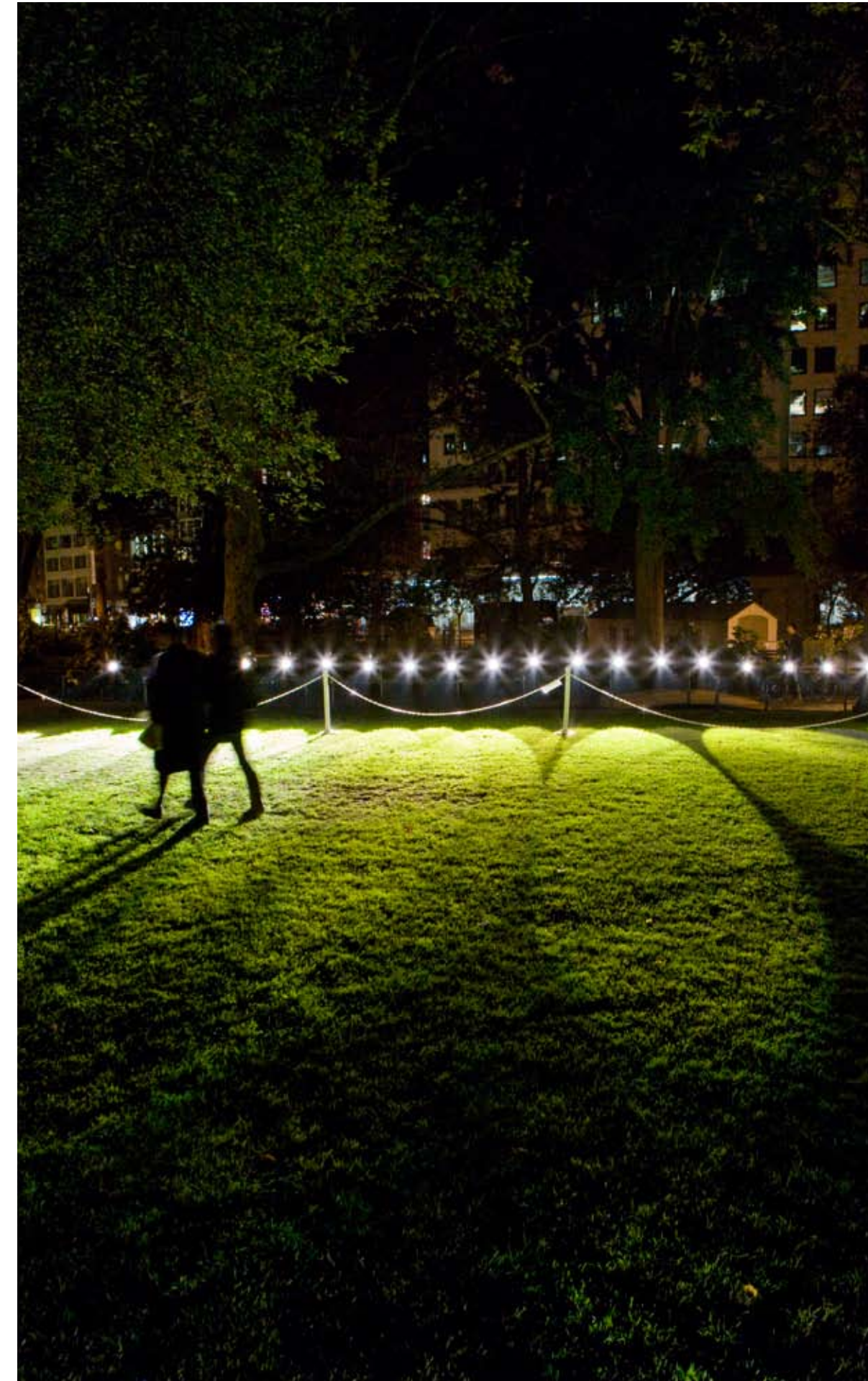
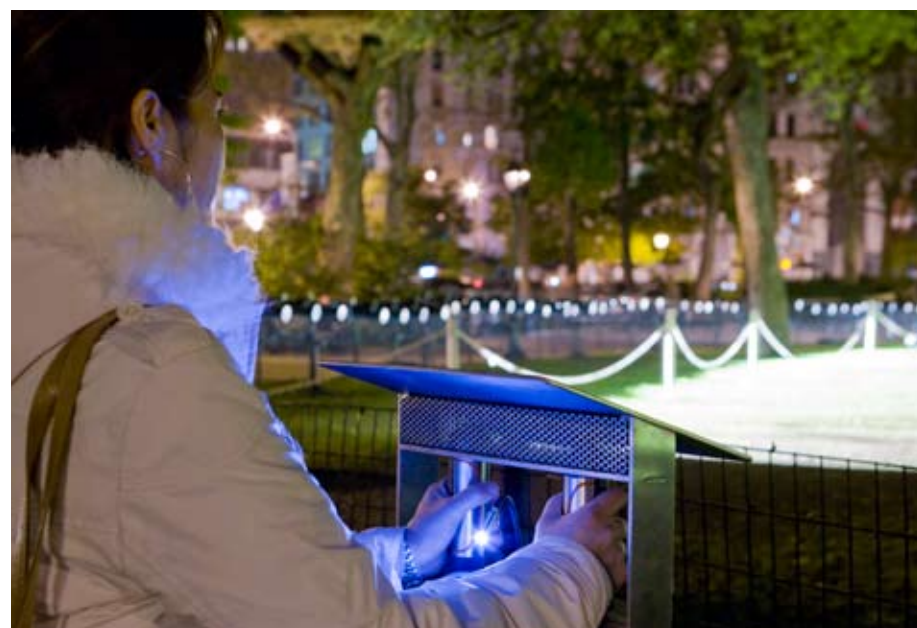






An earlier piece, *Body Movies*, offers a tantalizing connection to the invention of the cinema. The shadow play, the public spectacle of projecting shadows to create performances that were endowed with narrative meaning, created a new stage for illusion and magic and was a precursor of the cinema. The cinematic projection of the actor onto a larger-than-life screen gave new dramatic emphasis to the gestures and emotions of the performer. In *Body Movies*, Lozano-Hemmer created a large public-art project in which he deployed large xenon projectors powered by a computerized tracking system to project onto a wall images taken of individuals and groups within the community in which the piece is installed. Experienced at night, these 400- to 1,800-square-meter projections become the surfaces with which the spectators standing before the wall interact. Portraits measuring between two and 25 meters are revealed inside the projected shadows (silhouettes) of the spectators facing the large wall surface, creating a constantly shifting and changing ground of image and reference for the spectators. Much like the changing mass that is the space of public movement, the wall of the public space becomes a mirror onto which is reflected an image archive of people from all walks of life together with living presence of the actual viewer. *Body Movies* becomes a dialectical dance of visual impressions, a dialogue between friends and strangers as individuals, couples, and clusters of people reveal and then recompose themselves in relation to others within the space and images projected onto the wall.

(All photographs)
Pulse Park, 2008
 Light fixtures and
 heart rate sensor



(All photographs)
Pulse Park, 2008
 Light fixtures and
 heart rate sensor



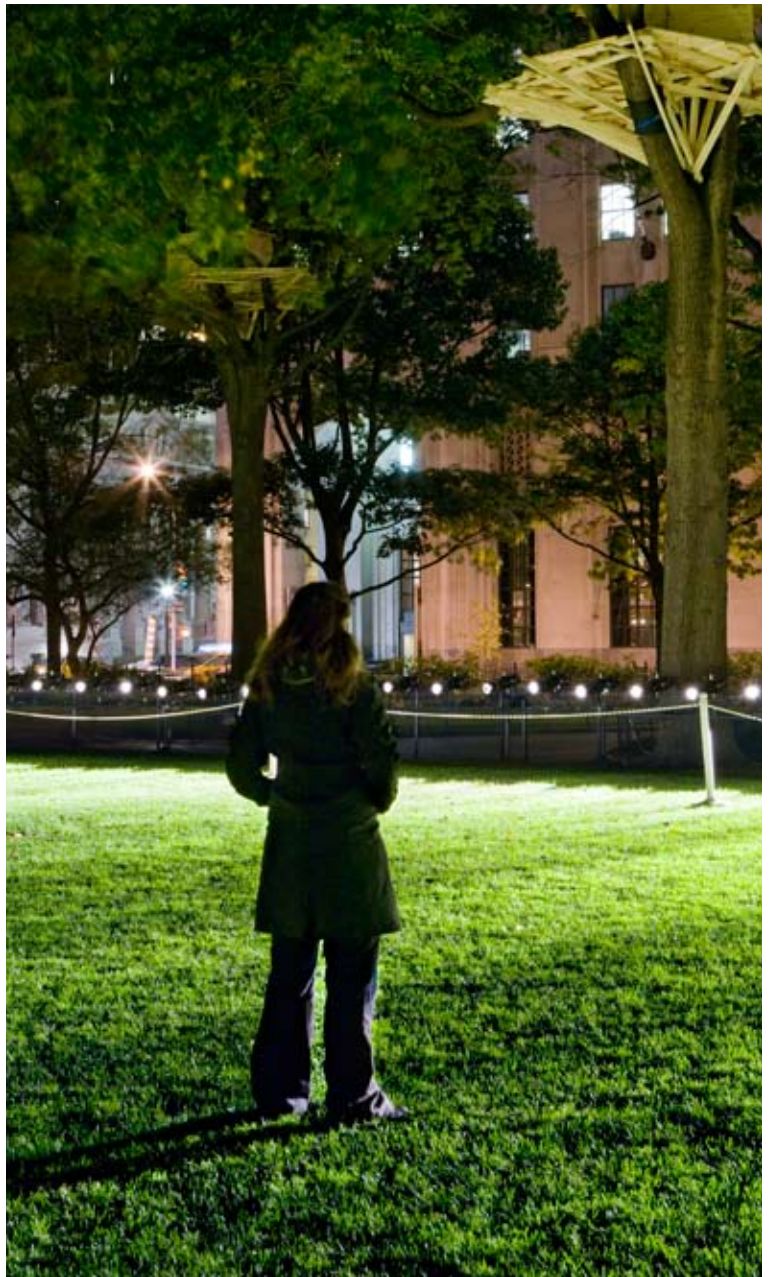
Pulse Room, first shown in 2006 and one of the highlights on the 2007 Venice Biennale, is the project that directly anticipates *Pulse Park*. In *Pulse Room*, rows of incandescent 300-watt light bulbs are uniformly distributed over the exhibition space. On a stand positioned on one side of the space is an interface with two sensors that a visitor holds. The computer detects the person's pulse rate, which causes the closest bulb to pulsate in a rhythm that mimics the beat of the person's heart. When the interface is released, the flashing sequences advance down the line of bulbs to then record the pulse of the next participant. The ceiling pulses with the record of up to a hundred participants, creating a visual display that echoes the flow of blood animated by the heart through each person's body. Lozano-Hemmer has noted the inspiration of a number of artists and ideas in composing this work, including the minimalist music of Steve Reich and Glenn Branca, the theory of cybernetics, and a scene from Robert Gvaldon's film *Macario* (1960) in which the protagonist, isolated in a cave, imagines people as lit candles.

In *Pulse Park*, Lozano-Hemmer expands on the original concept to create a dynamic and evocative electronic installation of 200 narrow-beam theatrical spotlights, and one heart-rate-sensor sculpture, that create a matrix of light across the Oval Lawn of Madison Square Park. The sensor sculpture installed at the south end of the park measures the participants' systolic and diastolic heart rates. This biometric data feeds into computers, which drive the pulses of light, which then move sequentially down the rows of spotlights as each person holds the sensor. *Pulse Park* is public sculpture seen as an interaction between the participant and a technology that drives and creates the sweeping arc of lights. Sculpture is historically about the figurative form and the embodied sense of self. Over the last century, artists have redefined sculpture with new materials reshaped to create visual experiences through our emotional, physical, and material sense of the artwork. Lozano-Hemmer has opened up further the place and space of the sculptural text, joining the visual and physical, the "whenabouts in the name of space," into an extension

of our inner biological selves. We become entranced and engaged as we see our hearts, pumping life-giving blood through our bodies, energizing and making visible a poetic and public mapping of ourselves. It is an art about life and renewal, and it is a wonderful gift from the artist to the people of the city of New York.

¹ Edward S. Casey, *The World at a Glance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, p.58

John G. Hanhardt is Consulting Senior Curator for Film and Media Arts at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Since beginning his career at the Department of Film at the Museum of Modern Art, he has curated film and media arts at the Walker Art Center, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Guggenheim Museum.



(All photographs)
Pulse Park, 2008
Light fixtures and
heart rate sensor

RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2008** *Wavefunction*, Kulczyk Foundation, Poznan, Poland
Under Scan, Trafalgar Square, London
bitforms gallery, New York City
Haunch of Venison, London
Frequency and Volume, The Curve, Barbican Centre, London
Voz Alta, Memorial for the Tlatelolco student massacre, Mexico City
Body Movies, Quebec City 400th anniversary,
Parc de la C  ti  re, Quebec City, Canada
Recorders, Edith Russ Haus f  r Medienkunst, Oldenburg, Germany
Body Movies, Te Papa Museum, Wellington, New Zealand
- 2007** *Some Things Happen More Often Than All Of The Time*,
Mexican Pavilion, 52nd Biennale di Venezia, Venice
Pulse Front, Luminato Festival, Toronto
- 2006** *Body Movies*, Museum of Art, HK Arts Development
Council, Hong Kong
bitforms gallery, New York City
Under Scan, public art commission, East Midlands
Development Agency, Nottingham, Castle Wharf, Derby,
Market Square, Northampton, Market Square, Leicester,
Humberstone Gate West
33 Questions per Minute, Spots Mediafa  ade, with
realities:united, Potsdamer Platz 10, Berlin
- 2005** *Subsculptures*, Galerie Guy B  rtschi, Geneva
Under Scan, public art commission, East Midlands
Development Agency, Lincoln, Brayford University Campus
Subtitled Public, Sala de Arte P  blico Siqueiros, Mexico City
- 2004** OMR Gallery, Mexico City
Vectorial Elevation, EU expansion celebrations, O'Connell
Street, Dublin
- 2003** bitforms gallery, New York City
Vectorial Elevation, F  te des Lumi  res, Place Bellecour, Lyon
Amodal Suspension, opening project of the Yamaguchi
Center for Art and Media, Yamaguchi, Japan
Relational Architectures, Laboratorio Arte Alameda, Mexico
Body Movies, Duisburg Akzente, Duisburg
- 2002** *Two Origins*, Place du Capitole, Printemps de Septembre
Festival, Toulouse
Vectorial Elevation, Opening project of Artium, Basque
Contemporary Art Museum, Vitoria-Gasteiz
- 2001** *Body Movies*, Cultural Capital of Europe Festival, V2
Grounding, Rotterdam
Airport Cluster, Foto/Graphik Galerie Kaethe Kollwitz, Berlin
- 2000** *Vectorial Elevation*, Z  calo Square, Mexico
- 1997** *Re:Positioning Fear*, 3rd Internationale Biennale Film +
Architektur, Graz
- 1992** *On the Same Hand but in a Different Vein*, Galerie
Stornaway, Montreal

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2008** *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, San Francisco Museum
of Modern Art, San Francisco, California
Prospect.1, New Orleans Biennale, NOMA Museum, New Orleans
YOUiverse, 3rd International Biennale of Contemporary Art,
Centro Andaluz de Arte Contempor  neo de Sevilla,
Sevilla, Spain
Pulse Spiral, Center for Contemporary Culture - Melnikov
Garash, Moscow, Russia
Turn and Widen, 5th Seoul International Media Art Biennale,
Seoul Museum of Art, South Korea
- 2007** *Automatic Update*, Museum of Modern Art, New York
Auto Emotion, Power Plant, Toronto
- 2006** *Zones of Contact*, Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of
New South Wales
- 2005** *Elektra Festival*, Mus  e d'Art Contemporain, Montr  al, Qu  bec
Art Meets Media, ICC, Tokyo
- 2004** *Techniques of the Visible*, Shanghai Biennial, Shanghai Art
Museum, Shanghai
- 2003** *Open, New Designs for Open Space*, Van Alen Institute, New York
Ill Communication, Dundee Contemporary Art, Dundee
- 2002** *E-phos Festival*, Athens
Liverpool Biennial, FACT, Liverpool
OK Centrum, Ars Electronica Festival, Linz
6th International Festival for Architecture in Video, Florence
Emo  ao Art.ficial, Itau Cultural, Sao Paulo
Egofugal, 7th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul
- 2001** *Media Arts Festival*, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of
Photography, Tokyo
Interactiva00, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, M  rida
- 2000** 7th Bienal de la Habana, Havana
OK Center, Ars Electronica Festival, Linz
- 1999** *Interactive Urban Landscapes*, Copenhagen
Art Futura Festival, Sevilla
- 1997** *Remote Sensations*, Ars Electronica Festival, Linz



PREVIOUS MAD. SQ. ART EXHIBITIONS.

- 2008

Olia Lialina & Dragan Espenschied *Online Newspapers: New York Edition*
Richard Deacon *Assembly*
- 2007

Bill Fontana *Panoramic Echoes*
Roxy Paine *Conjoined, Defunct, Erratic*
William Wegman *Around the Park*
- 2006

Ursula von Rydingsvard *Bowl with Fins, Czara z Babelkami, Damski Czepek*
- 2005

Jene Highstein *Eleven Works*
- 2005

Sol LeWitt *Circle with Towers, Curved Wall with Towers*
- 2004

Mark di Suvero *Aesope’s Fables, Double Tetrahedron, Beyond*
- 2003

Wim Delvoye *Gothic*
- 2002

Dan Graham *Bisected Triangle, Interior Curve*
Mark Dion *Urban Wildlife Observation Unit*
Dalziel + Scullion *Voyager*
- 2001

Nawa Rawanchaikul / *♥Taxi*
Teresita Fernandez *Bamboo Cinema*
Tobias Rehberger *Tsutsumu*
- 2000

Tony Oursler *The Influence Machine*


From 2000-2003, exhibitions were organized by the Public Art Fund on behalf of the Campaign for The New Madison Square Park.

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Special thanks to the Board of Trustees of the Madison Square Park Conservancy for their visionary commitment to art in the park.

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Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

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HAUNCH OF VENISON

OMR 

bitforms 


GALERIE GUY BÄRTSCHI

Pulse Park is sponsored by Fundación/Colección Jumex. Additional Project Support is provided by the Toby D. Lewis Trust, Haunch of Venison, bitforms gallery nyc, Galería OMR, Galerie Guy Bärtschi and the Speyer Family Foundation. This project is supported, in part, with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

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MAD. SQ. PK. CONSERVANCY

The Madison Square Park Conservancy, dedicated to keeping Madison Square Park a bright, beautiful and lively public park, is a public/private partnership with New York City Parks & Recreation. The Conservancy raises the funds that support lush and brilliant horticulture, park maintenance and security. The Conservancy also offers a variety of cultural programs for park users of all ages, including Mad. Sq. Art.



Madison Square Park Conservancy

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