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Coming Attraction: "Open Air," A Giant, Interactive 3-D Light Installation Coming To The Benjamin Franklin Parkway And The Philadelphia Skyline This September



The newly renamed Association for Public Art — formerly the The Fairmount Park Art Association — has commissioned renowned new media artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer for a world premiere sky-high interactive public art experience over the Benjamin Franklin Parkway later this year. (Simulated image of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's Open Air from the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, courtesy the Association for Public Art)

Pretty awesome news: the newly renamed Association for Public Art (aPA) — formerly the the Fairmount Park Art Association — has commissioned internationally acclaimed new media artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer for a pretty exciting new public art project titled **"Open Air"** set to hit the skies of Philadelphia this fall.

"Open Air" will be the world premiere of an interactive public art project created specifically for Philadelphia, the first project of the aPA under its new name.

Using a free custom-made app, participants will use their voices and GPS positions to activate 24 powerful robotic searchlights placed along a half-mile section of the Parkway — creating enormous three-dimensional light formations in the night sky. “Open Air” will run every night from September 20 to October 14 from 8-11 p.m.

The project is going to debut on September 20 during the 2012 Philadelphia Live Arts Festival & Philly Fringe and run through October 14, the close of Design Philadelphia.

The visual effect is going to be stunning, but another very cool part of “Open Air” is the interactive element: the installation will invite viewer participation through their voices and GPS positioning using a custom iPhone app developed for “Open Air.”

A computer program will automatically analyze the “Open Air” app users’ GPS positions and voices for frequency, intonation and volume, and will then convert these characteristics into unique searchlight formations in the sky over the Parkway. The lights will react, both in brightness and position, to each participant’s voice and words as they are being spoken.

This fall, you’ll be able to stand beneath a huge canopy of lights, and be mesmerized by the lights roving over the city. It’s like PIFA’s colorful Broad Street Lights... on steroids.

Tens of thousands of individuals will be able to participate live during the project’s duration, and hundreds of thousands more will experience the project as viewers. The project will be visible up to 10 miles away from the Parkway each evening from 8 to 11 p.m. A dedicated project headquarters, including app download and free mobile loan stations, will be located at Eakins Oval (24th Street and the Parkway).

The Association for Public Art received funding from the Knight Foundation and the National Foundation of the Arts for the project. Stay tuned for more details on the project in the weeks and months to come.

Meanwhile, get revved for another cool light installation headed to Philly: Longwood Garden’s LIGHT! by Bruce Munro, debuting this summer.

Open Air

Where: Benjamin Franklin Parkway; Project Headquarters – 24th Street and the Parkway

When: September 20-October 14, nightly 8-11 p.m.

More info: www.associationforpublicart.org

Check out some photos of a recent light installation from Lozano-Hemmer’s in Montreal, below.

At a recent installation by the artist in Montreal, “Articulated Intersect”, commissioned as part of the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal’s Triennale Québécoise 2011, Lozano-Hemmer used large joystick-like control tubes that invited viewer participation by allowing individuals to direct and control 18 searchlights on scaffolds and on the rooftops of numerous buildings adjacent to the project site.



*Internationally renowned artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s recent large-scale Montréal light installation, pictured here.
(Photo by James Ewing courtesy Rafael Lozano-Hemmer)*



At the Montreal installation, large joystick-like control tubes allowed individuals to draw, direct and control 18 searchlights on scaffolds and on the rooftops of numerous buildings adjacent to the project site.

(Photo by James Ewing courtesy Rafael Lozano-Hemmer)



A view of the searchlights from a distance extending above Montreal's skyline.

(Photo by James Ewing courtesy Rafael Lozano-Hemmer)