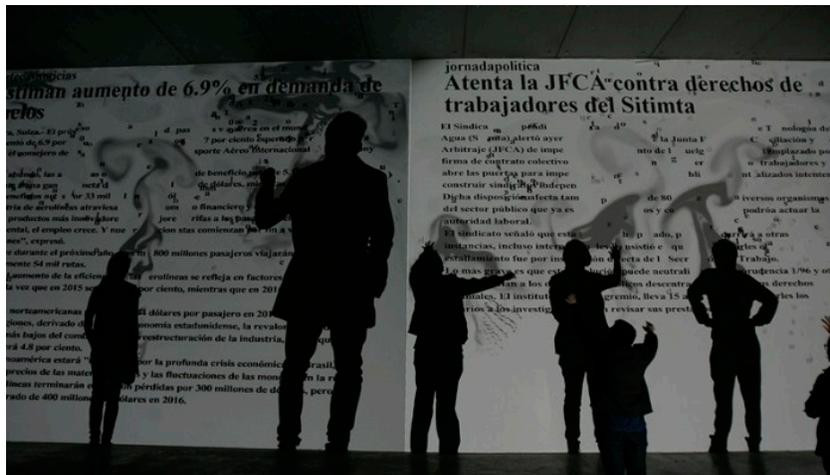


# CONFABULARIO

## Now the works are looking to the public": Rafael Lozano-Hemmer

By Sonia Sierra



Al aire (2015), participants block the light of a projector, and shadows are detected by computerized monitoring systems, while on the wall newswire / Alejandro Acosta

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is, today, Mexico's main exponent of electronic art. Twenty-three years of experience, develops facilities that take elements of engineering, architecture and performance. His pieces often use technologies such as robots, screens and monitoring systems. The aim is to create "live" and ever-changing platforms and rethinking the public's relationship with art.

His works can be found from the inquiry into the mathematical details that make them possible or may live from the experience. They can be understood as a starting point the artist and his team (always speaks in the plural) cause each viewer to run on their own many other new actions?: Or reactions from developing a thought to downloading software for replicate, decrypt, reinvent.

Born in Mexico City in 1967, Lozano-Hemmer lives in Montreal, where he has a studio where she works with ten people. With "Pseudomatismos" his new exhibition at the University Museum of Contemporary Art (MUAC) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, presents the viewer touring the shows, make decisions and even proposes to replicate its working methods.

"Pseudomatismos" is not a retrospective, is a monograph of 42 works of photography, sound sculpture, interactive video, "Experience is more similar to the performing arts to visual art. In visual art you get, you hang the works, prepare the install and when you finish the installation, is ready for the public to come and see. In our case, since it is all installed, we begin to set, calibrate and require the content

of the public. In (the work) Pavilion extensions, for example, hundreds of faces extracted by facial recognition is required; according to the number of people who visit the exhibition will become a more mature work. “

### **It is an exhibition that is mutating, which is not fixed.**

To some extent we are dealing with the return of the idea of aura in art. There was a very important test early last century, Walter Benjamin, who said that mechanical reproduction somehow took away the aura of art to the importance, originality, that sense of transcendence of the object; Now, just to the interaction, the works of art have the ability to surprise the public, have an aura because you're seeing something very specific, something that will never be repeated. There is work in the exhibition is called 33 questions per minute (33 Questions Per Minute) is a set of grammatical rules that combine verbs, adjectives announced and added, etc., and this algorithm generates questions that are usually quite absurd, as “ When orderly bleed? “One of the things that has this algorithm is that it never repeats the same questions, it will take three thousand years to ask 55 billion different questions you can ask the system. The idea is that when you visit this exhibition, each time the content will be different. Symbolically itself interests me the idea that something ephemeral works raise our presence, our breath, our heart, our vital signs, our facial features. The exhibition is customized by the public.

### **Whenever you concentrate more on the fact that in the works involving the viewer and it just made the piece.**

Exactly, and it was always the case. The artists were always aware of the activity of the public to create the work. Duchamp said that “is the look that makes the picture.” This idea that the work is incomplete is an open idea, the idea that the work is beyond the control of the artist. That's nice because as a participant you have some complicity and that is something I look for much in the works; complicity or rejection, but a very personal relationship. What counts in these works is not so much a historical political discourse, formal or informal, what prevails is the little relationships that can be established in an exhibition space before a work that presents with eccentric conditions of interaction or editing or hearing. The works tend to be small universes with conditions; Who will be interested to know where or how they work inspired, that is detailed in sheets or in the catalog room, but others will not, nothing else will see as a phenomenon. And it is good that the works themselves are interested enough to capture the attention of the public without the need to study. I think art always was. See a Matisse and say “this is enjoyed for what it is”, but you can also enjoy Matisse through a vision by historical example of the canvas, the shape, the color, the Euclidean space, social movements, theosophy ...

### **Is it an evolution, a life that continues in the works, which continues to be generated?**

Yes, I like to talk about life in the works. Before inviting the viewer to be a museum for the work so inspired, that will convey a feeling, a concept, and now it's the opposite: now are the works that listen, look and feel to the public and are the works they expect the public to do something. The works are alive, are aware, the works do not want to be limited to a fossilized form, reject one necrofilica and vampiric vision of what a museum, where they will be a kind of mausoleum or will keep them alive artificially , preventing a dignified death. The works they want to have new interactions found in surprising circumstances. In that sense, when I finish a book, actually it is unfinished and has its own life outside of what I can control.

### **What surprised you about that ?, What has brought results?**

For example, hunches store was a piece that began in 2006 in Puebla, which could well have been devoted to this area, Weaving Factory La Constancia; however, I have been on tours to many places, to the Venice Biennale; He has been, without exaggeration, as in 30 countries. Whenever the present learn; learn what is acceptable, what it is not so acceptable. Unlike a sculpture that has an autonomy, some independence, this book is more of a treatment. In the MUAC we are presenting a fairly new version, with sound; henceforth no longer I see this work in any way other than with sound. It is an example of how the work evolve over time and the difficulties faced by museums to collect this type of work, because a collector you just want to have a frame that represents a moment in the creative, technical, critical, social development , political, personnel of an artist or movement. When the pieces change, there are challenges that collectors have to accept the challenge, for example, to maintain a dialogue, an open mind about how these pieces can continue.

### **What responsibility do you have with the collector from the change?**

We, the team, and also speaking as a generation of artists are aware that the artwork is rather a set of instructions that can be represented in the future. This is not new, for example, when Moholy-Nagy, in 1923, a painting made by telephone, it was the ability to dematerialize the work and turn it into an instructive. We give the collector, museum or private instructions for such works can be reinterpreted in the future; give the source code, open all programming, schematic, all kinds of additional parts. We released the conservative or curator of the future to know how this work can be reinterpreted.

### **Are 23 years of work that you present here, are there reviews, ratifications, new quests?**

However it is not retrospective. Although the oldest piece is from 1992 it is true that I feel young. I do not want this to look like an overview of my work. It is a panorama, a monographic works about particular concepts, but we are quite prolific and many works were left out. I have two lines of work: one is public art and another is for museum or collector; This is the biggest I've done in the second category. Public art, in Mexico I have not done anything since Memorial Slaughter 1968 in Tlatelolco. I am interested in continuing the two lines; I am not mutually exclusive. Often the same devices, methods, interests, concepts, criticism, applied in part to open or in closed space.

### **Also MUAC you display in a piece about the missing young Ayotzinapa like Tlatelolco and share your approach that art can break control mechanisms ...**

Yes. Let's see, the artist is a citizen and as a citizen react to the circumstances surrounding his barbarism. When I heard of the tragedy of the kidnapping of Ayotzinapa, one problem was not knowing where they were; in my studio, we were just working on facial recognition, we almost police and military, for people search algorithms quite predatory. They are pretty terrible Control technologies because they are the same cameras that try to detect your ethnicity, race or you compared with a database of suspicious individuals. The novelty is that the camera has a capacity of decision and control. Given the fact that the normalistas not met, create a work whose sole purpose is not to stop looking for them. On the screen you see, makes you kind of facial recognition and you compares with 43 students, looking for which of them are more in your features, and gives a result: 'You Gethsemane Sanchez Garcia, but we only have 23% confidence level that is you. '

**The result is very strong: reminds us, we highlight that this absence must remain present. Somehow it changes the direction of surveillance because the computerized surveillance is used to find those responsible and the guilty here already know: they are in power. The piece seeks to victims.**

It is in the MUAC, but is not part of my presentation, it is important to say because it is not an exercise in political integration of these levels to an aesthetic discourse. Ayotzinapa piece is offered freely from my website (<http://www.lozano-hemmer.com>) for any foundation, university, gallery or collector can lower the use and display. He has appeared in 45 places. Any profit from the sale or exhibition of this work speaks directly to those affected in the community. It is a project that has to do with ways of acting and being aware of our own complicity in that loss, that we can find within ourselves, and we can ask to what extent could have been us?

### **Do you consider technology as a support, a language, a means?**

It is a language, a language inescapable. It is part of ourselves. It is not neutral. It is given by a desire for control, monitoring, communication that are not themselves but are given by systems that precede us, but at the same time we are part of this technology. We are cyborgs. No separation. The people who claim to be out of technology is precisely what is most enslaved here, he thinks he can take a step out and live in a manner supposedly natural. Even if you're not connected to a phone, global warming is technological culture. If you are a painter and you have no TV and I never saw Internet, no matter; You technological as long as the people who see your paintings have six hours of screen. There is a decision to work with technology. You can not criticize if you're not in.

### **Where are you going with this idea of sharing software and codes of your works?**

All exhibition "Pseudomatismos" the look, take the catalog and if you want to have a USB memory that contains the source, schematics, instructions to play my works codes. I do especially for Mexican developers to expand the methods that we have and make their own works. Instructions for making the works can not be closed, they must be open and dialogue. I understand that if you buy a photograph of Gursky (Andreas Gursky) and spend \$ 300,000, you get two copies, one for your wall and another that is stored in a refrigerator for preservation because photography can lose their saturation ... in my world that it is absolutely ridiculous. When you have an image of me, I give TIF image in a file that is infinitely reproducible because in the digital world the copy and the original are identical. Some say: 'I as a collector I worry that a huge reproduction of these works are done.' And my position is: 'If this work is reproduced infinitely, that's wonderful. The images want to be free'. Now if you as a collector you want is the assessment of my work as a studio, you're going to buy me the book to me because you're going to have a certificate of authenticity; This certificate of authenticity gives a feeling of complicity with artistic production and gives you financial security because when you try to sell print, photo, if you have the certificate, the work is worthless.

### **Is this something new to your work?**

It had not happened, although we gave Certificate of Authenticity and software but nothing collector. MoMA bought 33 questions per minute and when in doubt about what to do when there are no computers with Windows 95, MoMA took all our source code and instructions and gave a student, instead of Pascal, followed the instructions in C ++ with another operating system. That he showed MoMA it was not necessary to have an inventory of machines but that could migrate.

I decided that we can not remain complicit in a culture of fetish. We are facing many changes in the art and I like to talk not only of changes in social, artistic, philosophical, political or creative, but also financial. How can these experimental structures, can be self-sufficient, have sustainability. I am very interested in art management level. The artists do not like to talk about it, it seems that breaks the course romanticism that we have as artists inspired front of the canvas. This is not my case and that of many others. I respect those who feel well; Teamwork and will open this dialogue that my contribu-

tion not only for the elite but have a wider resonance group of creators.

It does not bother me at all that someone will take all instructional and use it in a personal way or use it to make your own version of a project. What I do is I have a need to create an environment of value so that when a museum or a collector wants to support the production of my study I can do it and you have the tools to do so.

In fact a certificate of my study is very different from the normal, is a self-certification process. It is not something that comes from the gallery, as is customary. We retrospectively for three years, are distributing new certificates are aluminum ingots that go with a double anodization, they recorded in my studio with our registration numbers of inventory, have three watermarks and are signed by myself with my hand, editing and numbers. But the idea of this file, this fossil is that it is irreproducible. This is what contains the value of the work, is what we asked the collector not to lose if we lose not play. However, if you lose the piece by a flood, nothing happens, we return it to do. Even better, because the technology has improved.

### **Why did you decide to intervene in the issue of preservation of the works?**

The problem we have is that artists are always in survival plan. The artist must be more committed to conservation, but it has many requirements that exceed it. I met Frank Stella and told me that he makes enough money to support his addiction to continue creating. Everyone, even the teenager who has trouble paying your rent, we want to keep the same addiction to continue creating. I wrote a document, "Best practices for the conservation of media art work from the perspective of an artist", where I think we make a contribution: artists need monetize conservation. The reason why we have no interest in how they will survive the works is because we're creating. What I do then, when someone buys a work of mine is to speak very clearly on the issue of conservation. The artists do not will attach importance to conservation and certification if we have a way to make that will yield us to maintain our operations. is criticized me quite by talking about these things because it is a taboo to talk about money. I love talking about money because the independence and autonomy that I have to do what I feel like no one can take away from me and I can only justify if I pay my staff, many of whom have been with me 17 years.

### **Have you found with unauthorized use of your works?**

They do marketing companies. For example hunches store , you see an ad for a new car with hundreds of blinking lights with palpitations ... They copy, it's annoying, I have a problem with purity advertising. What I want is to have some respect. At the end the art works have to be useless and the attempts to make advertising useful, trying to sell something. Art must have a passion against the utilitarian approach. They have to be works that are useless; that's when you find ambiguity, poetry, criticism, where you can find something that really can customize, but not when you are launching a logo that betrays the trust that you establish with the public.