



Watch Lights in Madison Square Park Pulse to Heartbeats

Lauren Young
FEBRUARY 14, 2017

In 2008, if you took a walk through the central oval lawn of Madison Square Park in New York City at dusk, you would have been immersed in flashing lights pulsing to the beat of someone's heart. Created by artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, "Pulse Park" was a temporary interactive installation that transformed Madison Square Park into a brilliant beating heart made of 200 beams of light.

The intensity of the "matrix of light beams" was synchronized with a person's heart rate, which was measured by sensors near the north end of the oval lawn. As a park visitor's systolic and diastolic activity was recorded, the spotlight rays would eventually dance across the grass to the time of the heartbeat. Then, as the person left the sensor, their heartbeat pulses would be sent to the first light, bumping previous recorded heart rates down the circle.

At a given time, 200 people's heart rates could be seen flashing at once, capturing a small sample of the city's pulse. "The electrical activity of the heart is amplified by 150,000 watts of light," the video says.

This is one of several heart-inspired art installations Lozano-Hemmer has created. He made an interactive "Pulse Index" that records people's fingerprints and heart rates and displays the data on large monitors in Sydney museum, and a water hose that uses heartbeat data in a park in Spain. In 2015, he projected powerful beams into the sky, the lights flashing in time with heart rates of people in Abu Dhabi.