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## Fiat Lux



The Mexican-Canadian media artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer <[www.lozano-hemmer.net](http://www.lozano-hemmer.net)> uses light as both the substance and the subject of his stunning interactive installations. His "relational architecture" pieces are a magnificent blend of Latin festivity and Western technology. For the millennium celebrations, the artist staged *Vectorial Elevation* <[www.alzado.net](http://www.alzado.net)> in one of the world's largest, liveliest squares: the Zócalo in Mexico City. Via the Internet, participants were able to control 18 robotic searchlights installed on rooftops around the square, choreographing a complex dance of light.

Webcams provided live video feeds and documented participants' designs. The response was overwhelming: *Elevation* received an honorable mention at this year's Webby Awards; on September 4, it will be awarded the Golden Nica prize at the Ars Electronica festival in Linz, Austria.

"I knew that [*Vectorial Elevation*] had to incorporate interactivity as a way of avoiding . . . [Albert] Speer-like spectacles. I wanted the main protagonist of the piece to be the participants themselves. Since the president of the Mexican National Council for Culture and the Arts had asked me to look at Mexican history

to find a point of departure, I investigated the largely undocumented history of Mexican technological culture. I found several useful precedents, from González Camarena's research on color TV to the popularization of electronic music by Luis Pérez Esquivel. One discovery was incredibly useful: the theory of cybernetics was postulated by Norbert Wiener and Arturo Rosenbleuth at the Mexican Institute of Cardiology to explain self-regulation in the heart. Cyber art is a native Mexican practice!"

—Geert Lovink



Photo: Martin Vargas