

Voice Tunnel August 12, 2013

This past weekend I had a chance to experience Voice Tunnel — an interactive light and sound installation by Mexican-Canadian artist [Rafael Lozano-Hemmer](#). It's a temporary installation in New York City's Park Avenue Tunnel and open just three Saturdays this month as part of [Summer Streets 2013](#).

The 1,400 foot long piece runs from East 33rd Street to East 40th Street. It's a collection of light-and-speaker pairs that line the sides of the tunnel. At the center, people can speak in to a microphone... the recoding is captured and played back on one of speakers and used to influence the brightness of a corresponding light. The tunnel, with 300 of those speaker-light pairs, becomes a cacophony of sounds and flickering lights. The sounds and lights only pause each time a participant adds a new sound through a simple "intercom" microphone. And as each new recording is added, an old one gets pushed aside.

Installed in a tunnel normally inaccessible to pedestrians, it has a gritty yet wondrous quality — you're in a part of "hidden new york" with a ton of other people... it's very communal.

The interactivity is quite simple, you record something, and it gets added to the mix. As a viewer you can choose to absorb it whole, or listen to an individual speaker — hearing an individual's contribution... an eclectic mix of pointless, humorous, personal, and profound. It reminded me of [Movable Type](#) — except here it's people, not software, that are choosing what to share.

You can read more about the piece in this [NYTimes article](#).



Heading in, after a bit of a line, signing some sort of waiver, and getting a hand-stamp.



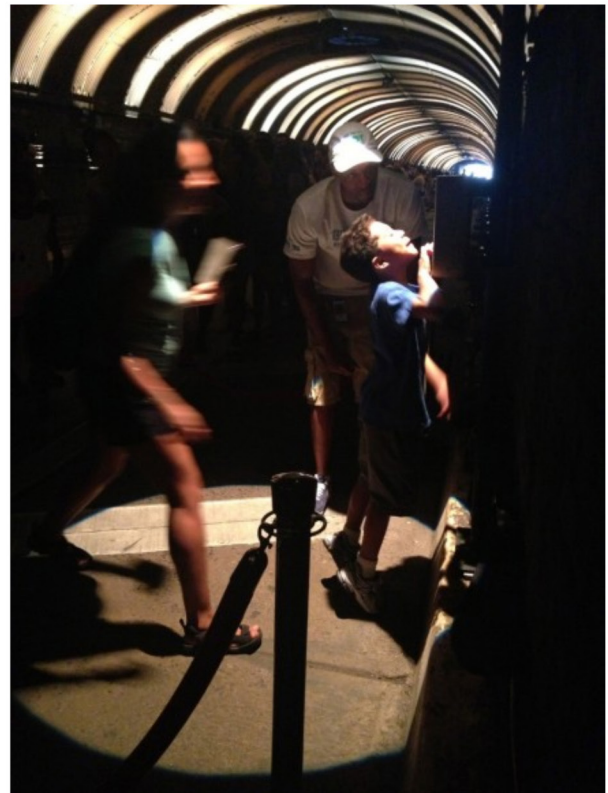
Here it is. The lights start in the center and then come rushing towards you, along with the audio.



One of the light-speaker elements. If you squat down you can listen to the individual contributions... a mix of the silly and personal.



As you get further inside it becomes more immersive.



At the center people take turns recording audio clips.



Just after a recording is made, it's played back loudly in the center. People hang out to listen, as well as watch the act of recording.



Everyone seemed to want to get pictures of themselves taken in the tunnel.



Here I took a picture of a guy taking the picture of a guy taking the picture of a someone listening to a speaker.



The crew making sure the thing keeps running.



That's it. Just lots of Summer Streets staff controlling the crowds.