

Park Avenue 'Voice Tunnel' Wants to Be the Next 'Rain Room'



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Alexander Abad-Santos 1,728 Views Jul 29, 2013

There's wonderful news for New Yorkers who didn't want to brave multi-hour lines and subsequently missed out on the 'Rain Room' at the Museum of Modern Art.



Come this weekend, there will be a new, fleeting art installation that people will be cooing about.

Behold, the Park Avenue "Voice Tunnel." Okay, so we understand that the Park Avenue tunnel doesn't exactly sound as sexy as being able to manipulate rain. And we're fully aware that the only time New Yorkers see the Park Avenue tunnel is when they're in a cab through Midtown. But the latter might be part of the allure. Instead of viewing the tunnel from the confines of a car, the art installation requires that pedestrians walk through it, something even jaded New Yorkers don't get (or want?) to do every day.

"On Saturday, the city will temporarily shut the tunnel to car traffic, and the 1,394-foot cavern — which runs on Park Avenue between 33rd and 40th Streets — will be turned into an incandescent, echoing, interactive art show," *reports The New York Times's* Julie Turkewitz, who goes on to explain that a team of 30 will build the installation each Friday for the next three weeks and take it down shortly before the tunnel reopens at 5 p.m. on Saturday.

The feats of shutting down the tunnel, building the installation, and then tearing it down some 12 hours later seem pretty intensive. So what's this all for? Turkewitz goes on to explain the installation:

Participants will be instructed to walk to a midpoint in the tunnel and deliver short messages into a silver intercom.

The messages will then billow outward in waves of sound and arching light until they disappear. The intensity of each beam will be determined by the pitch and volume of the messenger's voice. And the messages will shoot out quickly, one after another, creating a seemingly endless, ever-changing cascade of sound and light.

"We have a little delete button. Hopefully we don't have to use that." said **Rafael Lozano-Hemmer**, the installation's creator, discussing the Police Department's concerns that someone could transmit messages designed to cause panic.

Lozano-Hemmer, who lives in Canada, has had similar installations in New York's Madison Square Park and one in Philadelphia called "Open Air." The Philly project allowed participants to record voice messages which were then "played-back over the Benjamin Franklin Parkway using 24 powerful robotic searchlights that reacted, both in

brightness and position, to the voice's frequency and volume as well as to the phone's GPS location." Sounds pretty cool to us.

The Park Avenue Tunnel follows in the public-art footsteps of The Gates, and the New York City Waterfalls. And it's running right after the very popular "Rain Room" at MOMA closed this past Sunday after opening in May. Speaking of which, we hope someone has the good sense to bring a cronut into the Voice Tunnel and record the sounds of that delicious treat being consumed.

Inset photo via: nyc.gov

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