From its first year, Luminato has made the visual arts central to the festival experience. Lozano-Hemmer’s interactive light sculpture Pulse Front, Max Streifer’s QUADRIGA, along with a variety of other works exhibited at various sites in the downtown core, established free, unexpected encounters with art as a Luminato signature. “Art in public spaces,” says Alexander Neef, the General Director of the Canadian Opera Company, “is the most amazing thing about Luminato.”

David Michalek’s Slow Dancing, the multimedia StreetScape, conceived in association with Bruce Ferguson on behalf of the Art Gallery of Ontario, and Pierre Maravel’s Mille Femmes, portraits of 1,000 creative and inspiring women of Toronto, produced in partnership with Lancôme and exhibited at Brookfield Place, delighted Torontonians. “It’s about appropriating spaces,” says Atom Egoyan, whose video work Auroras, shown together with Kutlug Ataman’s Testimony, transformed a Distillery District space in Luminato 2007. “In a city such as Toronto, this is a kind of magical act.”

Then, after stops in Chicago and Barcelona, came Kurt Perschke’s RedBall Project Toronto in 2009. “The ball creates permission to play,” explains the artist. Toronto’s citizens happily took up his offer and hundreds photographed themselves with RedBall, which reappeared in a surprising new location each day. David Rokey’s long wave fascinated passersby in Brookfield Place. “My young daughter started skipping when she first saw it,” Rokey recalls. “And that was a good sign. And I think a lot of people got the same kind of giddy joy from it that she did.”