

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer uses various media as catalysts to transform viewers into active participants. His projects play out both through interacting networks formed in cyberspace and through interactive communication environments created in real spaces. In the 'Relational Architecture' (RA) series, he projects text and images onto historical buildings and other structures, drawing observers into an interaction with the latent memories of the location.

In installations like 'The Origins, Relational Architecture 7' (2002) Lozano-Hemmer projects texts that are specifically related to the actual history of the site. However, this is not always the case. 'Body Movies, Relational Architecture 6' (2002) projected montages of hundreds of people photographed on various city streets. The people walking in front of the building become the creators of the work when their shadows block the floodlights illuminating them and allow the projections to be seen. Depending on the distance of the participants from the light sources, the sizes of the shadows and the images they reveal can be anything between 2 and 25 metres, and can appear in a myriad of different shapes.

'Vectorial Elevation, Relational Architecture 4' (1999-2000) makes a connection between the information environment of the Internet and real urban spaces in a provocative work that opens up the potential for the actions of individuals to become public art. RA4 was a millennium celebration project for Zócalo Square in Mexico City, a space surrounded by monumental buildings, and a symbol of Mexico’s discontinuous historical memories. Lozano-Hemmer installed searchlights on the tops of the buildings so that their criss-crossing beams would form an ephemeral structure made from the mid-air intersection of light. People around the world could access the project’s website and move the beams to change the design of the structure. Conceived in the tradition of son et lumière spectacles, the project linked the people gathering in the square and those on the Internet into one global and virtual information space, and became a pointer to the potential for new creation by a collective intellect working through cyberspace.

33 Questions per Minute, Relational Architecture 5 (2001) asked philosophical questions about authorship and the relationship between machines and people. Lozano-Hemmer used software programmed to create a generator capable of using grammatical rules to combine words from the dictionary, creating fifty-five billion different questions. These were presented on tiny LED screens at a rate of thirty-three per minute, mingled with other questions entered by participants so that observers were unable to distinguish between them. The screens were sited in the Hagia Eirene Church in Istanbul, a structure dating back to the time of Emperor Justinian. The solidity of historical time and the context of the Orient bathed the project in a special philosophical significance, giving it the atmosphere of an interactive Zen dialogue. Not knowing whether the questions were machine- or manmade brought in the issue of individuality. In querying the collective memory buried in the history of place, as well as the potential of collective intelligence, Lozano-Hemmer’s work represents a new type of media catalyst.

Yuko Hasegawa
Vectorial Elevation, Relational Architecture 4, 1999-2000
18 tribune: 10 searchlights, 3 searchguns, DAVE/TOC/PIP converter, Java interface, GPS tracker, web server, light sculptures up to 15 km high
Installation millennium celebrations, Zócalo Square, Mexico City, 2000
Vectorial Elevation, Relational Architecture 4, 2002
10 robotic 7kW searchlights, 4 webcams, DMX-TCP/IP converter, Java interface, GPS tracker, web server, light sculptures up to 15 km high
Installation ‘Artium Opening’, Basque Museum of Contemporary Art, Vitoria, 2002

Re:Positioning Face, Relational Architecture 3 (with Will Basar), 1997
2 robotic 7kW search film projectors, 2 Barco projectors, webcams, custom IRC Java client, 3-D tracking system, PA system, control computers, 500 m² of projections from an online symposium on the concept of fear
Installation: Architecture and Media Biennale, Graz, 1997

55 Questions per Minute, Relational Architecture 5, 2001
55 liquid-crystal displays, laptop computer, plasma electret speaker, video projector, each LCD screen 10 x 10 cm
Installation: 7th Istanbul Biennale, Hagia Eirene, Turkey, 2001

Eau origines, Relational Architecture 7, 2002
4 projectors, 7 kW xenon film projectors, computer controller, mirrors, 1,000 m² interactive projection of the book of Eau Origines, a heroic thirteenth-century manuscript, with the assistance of Jennifer Lauglin
Installation 'Fragileuses', Festival Printemps de Septembre, Place du Capitole, Toulouse, 2002

Body Movies, Relational Architecture 6, 2002
4 projectors, 5 kW xenon film projectors, custom-made shadow-tracking system, 1,200 portraits
on durancine film, PA system, control computers, mirrors, 1,000 m² interactive projection
Installation 'Unplugged', Ars Electronica Festival, Linz, 2002