

**Under Scan — Castle Wharf, Nottingham, until March 26**



HE persuaded ordinary folk to design light beams in the sky above Mexico City, projected words onto the chests of people in Madrid — words which they couldn't get rid of without touching somebody else — and enticed the citizens of Tokyo to tune into their city's radio stations using only their bodies.

Now Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is dazzling and provoking Nottingham in a long-awaited public art projection titled *Under Scan*.

Said to be the world's largest interactive video art installation, *Under Scan* was unveiled this week outside Nottingham Magistrates' Court.

What thousands of passers-by will experience is an area of around 1,500 square metres bathed in white light, where their shadows suddenly contain the moving projections of total strangers.

As you walk forward, the figure in the shadow unnervingly turns and looks you straight in the face. Move back, and the shadow figure also loses interest and fades away.

How does he do it? Well, I've never been one for examining the mechanics behind magic. I'd rather enjoy the magic as magic.

But, suffice to say, when Lozano-Hemmer unveiled *Under Scan* in a public lecture at the Broadway cinema last year, he explained the project involved an incredibly powerful projector, a multitude of cameras and hundreds of moving portraits of Nottingham volunteers, captured as they lay on the floor and then moved and looked at the camera in a wide variety of poses.

It is, of course, some of these 200 portraits which stare back at you from your own shadow. But since Lozano-Hemmer also managed to film around 800 other people from the region, the grand total of 1,000 video portraits means you're unlikely to ever see the same shadow projection more than once.

This kind of strange but absorbing interactivity is Lozano-Hemmer's stock-in-trade. Of Mexican and Canadian heritage, the young artist is internationally known for public art

projects such as *Vectorial Elevation* which, via a website, allowed anyone to design huge light shapes in the sky projected by 18 powerful searchlights.

In Mexico City, the work attracted 800,000 amateur designers for the Millennium celebrations; it later travelled to Basque Spain, France and Dublin.

In a later work first seen in Madrid, titled *Subtitled Public*, Lozano-Hemmer devised an installation whereby all visitors were tracked by an infrared surveillance system which projected words — specifically verbs conjugated in the third person — onto their bodies.

Each tagged visitor was unable to shake off the words until they touched another visitor — at which point each person's words exchanged places.

A third project, titled *Frequency and Volume*, enabled visitors to use their bodies as live antennae by allowing them to tune in and out of a range of radio messages — pagers, radio stations, air traffic controllers, police — depending on the size of their shadows.

So why Nottingham? First, *Under Scan* was Commissioned by the East Midlands Development Agency, the development quango based at the Boots Island site.

And although Lozano-Hemmer has already brought *Under Scan* to Leicester, Lincoln, Northampton and Derby, the Nottingham installation is being regarded as the finale and as a kind of high-tech flagging-up event for the major cultural events set to take place in the city.

These include the opening of the £13m CCAN arts centre in the Lace Market in 2008 and the start of the 6th British Art Show next month.

However, there's more to Lozano-Hemmer than clever shadow boxing.

At the Broadway, he happily revealed his subversive streak, describing how all of his work was concerned with developing a truly inclusive public art which sought to criticise and defy systems of surveillance, social control

and, indeed, the tendency towards ever greater social homogenisation through globalisation.

He didn't have much time for "regeneration" either: "Too often, regeneration just means opening a new Starbucks and installing some Victorian street lamps," he said last year at the Broadway.

One may well ask how such views can accommodate a commission from one of the Government's big regional development agencies.

Lozano-Hemmer admitted he didn't have a pat answer to that question; he was, he added, part of the system he was criticising. Yet knowing the artist's anti-establishment views in advance could make the experience of *Under Scan* just that little bit more edgy — as well as fun.

■ **Under Scan can be seen until March 26. It's free.**

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**Light beams: Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's Mexico City project**