

Powerhouse Ultimo presents the Australian Premiere of Atmospheric Memory



Powerhouse Ultimo has announced the Australian premiere of the major exhibition *Atmospheric Memory* by Mexican Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer.

Opening 12 August 2023 at Powerhouse Ultimo, the sensory experience will present works that engage audiences with science, maths and climate alongside objects from the Powerhouse Collection.

Atmospheric Memory headlines the Powerhouse Museum's Sydney Science Festival, presented across the city from 11 – 20 August 2023. The nine-day festival will explore the theme of *Trace*.

“The NSW Government is proud to support *Atmospheric Memory* through the Blockbuster Funding Initiative. This exhibition, which transforms vibrations into something people can hear, see and touch, will undoubtedly be one of the highlights of the NSW cultural calendar,” said NSW Minister for Arts and Tourism, John Graham.

After presentations in the UK and US, artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer said he is thrilled to be collaborating with Powerhouse to present a new version of this exhibition in response to the museum's globally renowned collection.

“*Atmospheric Memory* is inspired by the writing of XIX Century computer pioneer Charles Babbage, who believed that the air surrounding us is a ‘vast library’ containing every sound, motion and word spoken,” said Rafael Lozano-Hemmer.

“Babbage wanted to rewind the motion of all molecules of air to hear again the voices of long-lost loved ones, vows and promises unredeemed.”

“*Atmospheric Memory*, possibly the most ambitious project I have ever undertaken, explores his idea 200 years later, when the dream of perfect recollection is one of the defining conditions of our digital life, and the air that we breathe has become a battleground for the future of our planet,” said Lozano-Hemmer.

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is a media artist working at the intersection of architecture and performance art, internationally celebrated for creating platforms for public participation and transforming social environments with a range of technologies.

He was the first artist to represent Mexico at La Biennale di Venezia and has been awarded two BAFTAs for Interactive Art. His works are held in the collections of numerous leading institutions including Museum of Modern Art and Guggenheim (New York), Tate Gallery (London) and National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne).

Commissioned by Manchester International Festival, *Atmospheric Memory* debuted at their 2019 festival. *Atmospheric Memory* is a sensory exhibition exploring Babbage’s 1838 theory through cutting-edge technology and new interactive works transforming vibrations in the atmosphere into something visitors can see, hear and even touch.

Works include a voice-controlled fountain where spoken words are formed in water vapor hanging momentarily in the air; a corridor of over 3000 different channels of natural and unnatural sounds including over 200 types of insects and 300 types of birds; a voice-controlled light beacon and the world’s first 3D printed speech bubble.

The Powerhouse presentation will include 50 objects from the museum’s collection including Charles Babbage’s **Difference Engine No 1** – a general-purpose mechanical calculating machine that anticipated the principles and structure of the modern computer; **tin foil phonograph** – a rare example of one of the earliest sound recording and playback machines, invented by Thomas Edison in 1877; and an **Aneroid barometer** used at Sydney Observatory in the late 1800s to measure atmospheric pressure and make weather forecasts.

“The Powerhouse holds Australia’s most significant collection of science, technological and design objects, including one of the only existing models of Charles Babbage’s Difference Engine No1, completed by his son after his passing,” said Powerhouse Chief Executive, Lisa Havilah.

“The development of *Atmospheric Memory* at the Powerhouse is a collaborative process between the artist and museum, and we are excited to share this incredible experience with our visitors.”

Coinciding with National Science Week, ***Sydney Science Festival***, now in its eighth year, will see leading scientists, academics and researchers explore the marks humanity makes in a curated program of free and ticketed events including talks, workshops and activities.

Atmospheric Memory

Powerhouse Ultimo, 500 Harris Street, Ultimo

Exhibition: 12 August – 5 November 2023

Entry fees apply

Information and Bookings: www.powerhouse.com.au

Image: *Atmospheric Memory* by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, *Cloud Display 9* (2019) at UNC2021 – photo by Olivier Groulx

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