

## Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, 'Voice Array, Last Breath, and Open Air'

By [Bruce Sterling](#)  September 7, 2012 | 1:33 pm | Categories: [Tech Art](#)



\*He's our favorite Mexican-Canadian tech-artist.

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer  
Voice Array

September 6–October 13, 2012

bitforms gallery nyc  
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[www.bitforms.com](http://www.bitforms.com)

bitforms gallery is pleased to announce its fourth solo exhibition with Mexican-Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. The exhibition features the United States premiere of two projects: Voice Array, a participatory environment that debuted last Fall in Sydney, Australia, at the Museum of Contemporary Art; and Last Breath, which was part of the 11th Bienal de la Habana. Concurrent with the New York exhibition, on September 20, Lozano-Hemmer will also unveil Open Air, a new commission by the Association for Public Art in Philadelphia.

Since his emergence in the 1990s, Lozano-Hemmer has mixed the disparate fields of digital media, robotics, medical science, performance art, and lived experience into interactive artworks. Probably best known for his large-scale "Antimonuments," which challenge traditional notions of site-specificity, he focuses on the idea of creating relationship-specific work through connective interfaces. Often employing vanguard technologies, many of his projects utilize robotics, custom software, projections, internet links, cell phones, sensors, LEDs, cameras, and tracking systems.

The communal spaces that Lozano-Hemmer creates are an experiment in public authorship. Technology in his work activates seamless "encounters of art, self and the kinetic force of collective memory," writes Claudia Arozqueta ([Artforum.com](#), Jan 2012). As a conductor of this experience, he seduces the audience into participation, using tactile sensation, repetition and the simulated presence of an individual.

Filling the gallery's far wall, Voice Array is a construction for vocal improvisation that uses blinking LEDs and a customized intercom system of audio playback and recording. Capturing hundreds of voices and translating each one into a series of light flashes, the piece stores a unique pattern as a loop in the first light of the array, until the next participant speaks into the intercom. Each new recording is pushed along its long horizontal band of LEDs, as sounds of the voices gradually accumulate. When the first voice reaches the other side of the piece, the participant's phrase is once again released as sound, punctuated by the staggering pulsation of all the lights in tandem. The ever-changing voices stored by the piece play back through a directional speaker, during moments of less activity.

At the gallery entrance, Last Breath is a robotic installation that stores and circulates the breath of a person forever, between a bellows and a brown paper bag. The apparatus is automatically activated 10,000 times per day, the typical respiratory frequency for an adult at rest. With each breath the piece generates quiet sounds from the bellows, the motor and the crackling of the paper bag. The piece also sighs 158 times a day. For the exhibition in New York, the piece is a biometric portrait of Cuban singer Omara Portuondo. A short video of her recording her breath into the device is shown on a small screen mounted to the wall.

### Concurrent Public Project

Open Air: Sep 20–Oct 14, 2012; Association for Public Art, Philadelphia, PA

Open Air is a large, interactive public art installation that activates 24 robotic searchlights placed along a half-mile section of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway—creating enormous three-dimensional light formations in the night sky. Using a free custom-made mobile app designed by the artist, the voices and GPS positions of participants generate its content, in a 'crowdsourced' experience of public space and urban connection. The project will activated each evening from 8pm to 11pm.

For images and more information:

[www.bitforms.com/current](http://www.bitforms.com/current)

[www.openairphilly.net](http://www.openairphilly.net)

[www.lozano-hemmer.com](http://www.lozano-hemmer.com)

For further details, please contact [info@bitforms.com](mailto:info@bitforms.com) or call 212 366 6939.

