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pulse room

rafael lozano-hemmer

rafael lozano-hemmer (f. 1967), mexico

Jeg kan huske den første gang, jeg så *Pulse Room*. Der stod en gammel mand foran installationen. Han var både på vagt overfor den og tryllebundet. Da jeg nærmede mig, drejede han ikke engang hovedet, men spurgte mig: "Tror du, den vil give mig et elektrochok, hvis jeg rører den?" *Pulse Room* vil aldrig gøre noget så ubehageligt ved dig, men det betyder dog ikke, at du vil blive ladet uberørt af den. *Pulse Room* vil stjæle en af dine mest personlige og vitale ejendele: dit hjerteslag.

Rafael Lozano-Hemmers installation indfanger din puls, når du griber fat i to håndtag, der fungerer på samme måde som en hjertetræningsmaskine i et fitness-center. Systemet behøver blot nogle få sekunder til at registrere dit hjerteslag og aktivere den første elektriske pære. Pæren begynder at blinke med samme hastighed som dit hjerte. Installationen vågner op til dåd. Når du slipper håndtagene, bliver du klar over, at hjerteslaget ikke kun er dit længere.

Når en ny person får sin puls taget, erobrer dennes hjerteslag den første pære, og dit sendes videre til den næste pære. Processen gentages igen og igen, indtil alle elpærerne pulserer. Der hænger 300 lysende elpærer fra loftet. Noget så sart og intimt som hjerteslag bliver del af et stort tableau.

Med al deres skønhed, legende undertoner og poesi giver Lozano-Hemmers værker de mest hverdagsagtige genstande og situationer et nyt formål og engagerer tilskuerne i kritisk refleksion. Det er aldrig hensigten med den teknologi, som den mexikansk-canadiske kunstner benytter, hvad enten det drejer sig om overvågningskameraer, robotkonstruktioner, sensorer, mobiltelefoner eller specialudviklede anordninger, at den skal fremkalde en fornemmelse af innovation og fremskridt. Teknologi er Lozano-Hemmers medie, fordi det falder ham naturligt. Teknologi er, når alt kommer til alt, blevet en fast bestanddel af vores dagligdag.

Pulse Room demonstrerer på en meget visuel og bevægende måde, i hvor høj grad vores krop er indbyrdes forbundet med teknologien. Installationen forvandler biorytmer til kunst uden hverken at styre eller ønske at skjule teknologiens destruktive væsen. En af de mest harmløse og skrøbelige genstande, som findes i alle husholdninger, elpæren, bliver til en raffineret budbringer. Selvom de lyser blidt, påviser pærerne de besnærende men også mørke sider af teknologien, nærmere bestemt biometri. I oldtidens Grækenland var termen neutral, den fremkaldte blot associationer om at "måle liv". I dag betegner biometri to forskellige undersøgelses- og anvendelsesområder. Det første er indsamling og håndtering af biologiske data. Det andet område har på det seneste haft stor

bevågenhed i medierne på grund af dets skræmmende biklange. Biometrisk overvågning sporer og analyserer fysiske og / eller adfærdsmæssige karakteristika til brug for autentificering, identifikation eller screening.

Lozano-Hemmers installation har dog en lykkelig slutning: så snart din puls når den sidste pære, forsvinder den ud af systemet.

Régine Debatty (f. 1971) er blogger, journalist og kurator og skriver om krydsfeltet mellem kunst, design og teknologi på sin blog we-make-money-not-art.com og i en række design- og kunstmagasiner



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rafael lozano-hemmer (b. 1967), mexico

I remember the first time I saw *Pulse Room*. An old man was standing in front of the installation. He was both wary of it and mesmerized. When I came nearer, he didn't even turn his head, but he asked me: "Do you think that this thing will send me an electroshock, if I touch it?" *Pulse Room* will never do anything so unpleasant to you, but that doesn't mean, you'll be left untouched by it. *Pulse Room* is going to steal one of the most intimate and vital things you have: your heartbeat.

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's installation captures your pulse when you grip two handles that work in a way similar to the cardio-training machines of a gym club. The system only needs a few seconds to register your heartbeat and activate the first light bulb. The bulb starts blinking at the same rate as your heart. The installation wakes up to life. When you release the handles, you realize that your heartbeat is not just yours anymore.

When a second person has his pulse taken, his heartbeat conquers the first bulb, and yours is passed on to the second light bulb. The process is repeated again and again, until all the lights are pulsing. There are three hundred incandescent light bulbs suspended from the ceiling. Something as delicate and internal as

a heartbeat becomes part of a large-scale tableau.

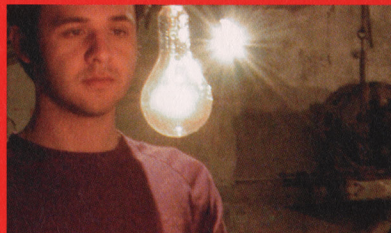
With all their beauty, playful undertones and poetry, the works of Lozano-Hemmer re-purpose the most mundane objects and situations and engage the public in critical reflection. The technology used by the Mexican-Canadian artist, whether it is surveillance cameras, robotics, sensors, mobile phones, or custom-made devices, is never meant to provoke a sense of innovation and progress. Technology is Lozano-Hemmer's media, because it is what comes naturally. Technology, after all, has become part and parcel of our everyday life.

Pulse Room demonstrates in a very visual and moving way how much our body interconnects with technology. The installation turns bio-rhythm into art without managing nor wanting to hide the predatory nature of technology. One of the most innocent and fragile objects one may find in every household, the light bulb, becomes a subtle messenger. While glowing softly, each bulb points up the enchanting but also dark sides of technology, and more precisely biometrics. In ancient Greece the term was neutral, it merely evoked associations of "the measure of life". Nowadays biometrics designates two different fields of study and application. The first one is the collection and management of data in biology. The second sphere of biometrics has

gained large attention in the press lately for its sinister connotations. Biometric surveillance tracks and analyzes physical and / or behavioral characteristics for authentication, identification, or screening purposes.

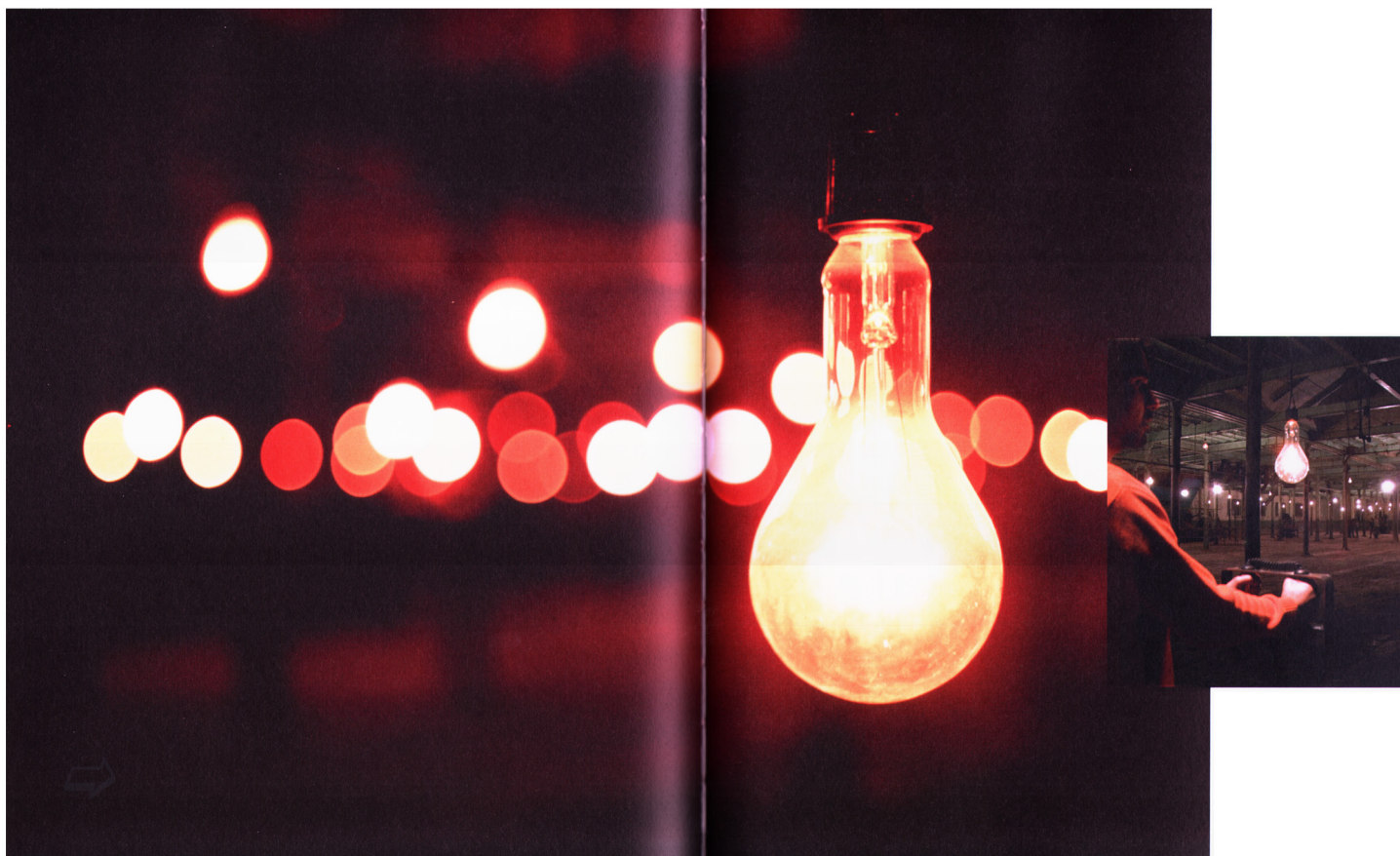
Lozano-Hemmer's installation, however, has a happy ending: after your pulse has reached the last bulb, it disappears from the system.

Régine Debatty (b. 1971) is a blogger, reporter and curator and writes about the intersection between art, design and technology on her blog we-make-money-not-art.com as well as in various design and art magazines



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rafael lozano-hemmer

pulse room, 2006

født | born 1967, Mexico City, MX **arbejder i | works in** Montreal, CA **uddannelse | educa-
tion** 1989 B.Sc. in Physical Chemistry from Concordia University in Montréal, CA **udvalgte
udstillinger | selected exhibitions** **2008** Wavefunction, Kulczyk Foundation, Poznan, PL |
Under Scan, Trafalgar Square, London, UK | Pulse Park, Madison Square Park, New York
City, US | Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Bitforms gallery, New York City, US | Rafael Lozano-Hem-
mer, Haunch of Venison, London, UK | Frequency and Volume, The Curve, Barbican Centre,
London, UK | Voz Alta, Memorial for the Tlatelolco student massacre, Mexico City, MX | Body
Movies, Quebec City 400th anniversary, Parc de la Cétéière, Quebec City, CA | Recorders, Edith
Russ Haus für Medienkunst, Oldenburg, DE | Body Movies, Te Papa Museum, Wellington, NZ |
2007 Some Things Happen More Often Than All Of The Time, Mexican Pavilion – 52 Biennale
di Venezia, Venice, IT | Pulse Front, Public art installation at LuminaTO, Toronto, CA | **2006**
Body Movies, Museum of Art, HK Arts Development Council, HK | Bitforms gallery, New York,
US | Under Scan, public art commission, East Midlands Development Agency, Nottingham,
Castle Wharf, Derby, Market Square, Northampton, Market Square, Leicester, Humberstone
Gate West, UK | 33 Questions per Minute, Spots Mediafaçade, Postdamer Platz 10, Berlin, DE
| **2005** Subsculptures, Galerie Guy Bärtschi, Geneva, CH | Under Scan, public art commission,
East Midlands Development Agency, Lincoln, Brayford University Campus, UK | Subtitled Pub-
lic, Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, MX City | **2004** OMR Gallery, MX City.