

RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER  
*Under Scan* 2008 Robotic  
projectors, media servers,  
Pani projectors, scissor lifts,  
computerized surveillance  
system and custom software  
PHOTO THIERRY BAL

**Rafael Lozano-Hemmer**  
TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LONDON

Blaring music, a crowded dance floor, countless margaritas and tall women dressed in PVC pants and motorcycle helmets serving canapés out of pizza boxes can only mean one thing: the private-view party at Haunch of Venison for the Mexican-Canadian multimedia artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's first commercial show in London.

Fresh from the turntables following a 45-minute DJ set, Lozano-Hemmer looks as energetic as ever, despite a sleepless night installing his show (it occupied all three floors of the gallery)—but it does not stop there for the self-professed “computer geek.” A few days earlier, Lozano-

Hemmer put the final touches on *Frequency and Volume*, a massive indoor commission created for the Curve gallery at the Barbican Centre, and a month later installed a retrospective of his moving-image works at the ICA. However, Lozano-Hemmer's largest and arguably most high-profile work in London to date was an epic installation entitled *Under Scan*—an outdoor projection work.

Restaged for Trafalgar Square, *Under Scan* employed two monumental projectors, each with a light intensity of 110,000 lumens, and a sophisticated computer-tracking system. The work covered 2,000 square metres of public space, making it the world's largest interactive video installation. As the project remained active for nine days, it also became the longest-running temporary event ever held on the historic square.

The basic idea behind *Under Scan* has the public area flooded with light. When spectators walk into the space, their body casts a shadow and triggers the appearance of an image of a person, or “video portrait,” in their personal shadow. The portrait is not static, but in fact responds to the spectator's actions by establishing eye contact when it is revealed by a shadow. More than 1,000 of these portraits are contained in the work, making the possible encounters appear endless.



Not only was the location impressive—Trafalgar Square is one of London's most popular tourist spots—but so was the partnership that brought the work into being. Involved in the commission were Arts Council England, ArtReach, the Canadian High Commission, East Midlands Development Agency, the Fundación/Col-ección Jumex, the Mexican Embassy, London's National Gallery, the Québec Government Office, the Science Museum, Tate Media, Tate Modern and Art Lights London, a new not-for-profit cultural legacy program facilitating temporary and permanent public-art installations. *Under Scan* was the first project to be launched under the scheme.

Referring to his works as platforms, Lozano-Hemmer emphasizes the importance of the public in his projects; his artworks will not function without spectator participation. He is quick to clarify that the technology is not meant to intimidate, but rather to allow the public to regain a sense of ownership of shared spaces—his works depend completely on people's desire to interact.

Lozano-Hemmer is a leading artist in the field of digital electronic art, and despite all his innovations, he takes issue with people categorizing his work as new media. “I detest the notion that we're original.... It's a continuation. It's not a new way of approaching art.” Whatever the case may be, Lozano-Hemmer is a boundary-breaking intellectual who loves nothing more than to see a sea of complete strangers acting out and having a good time.

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