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Inside Art

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Art in a Heartbeat

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's light installations have been seen in places like Mexico City and Lyon, France; Dublin and Venice, where he represented his native Mexico at the 2007 biennale.

Starting next month Mr. Lozano-Hemmer's work will be seen by thousands of people in New York and then London.

Every evening at dusk till about 10 p.m. from Oct. 24 through Nov. 17 the oval lawn at Madison Square Park — that swath of green space between Madison and Fifth Avenues from 23rd to 26th Street — will show "Pulse Park," an interactive electronic installation that consists of 200 theatrical spotlights and two heart-rate sensor sculptures that will create a pulsating dance of light across the park.

Visitors can have their heart rates monitored by touching the sensor sculptures, and 200 different pulses will be transmitted by computer program, beating simultaneously in a variety of light patterns.

"This project is three years in the making," said Debbie Landau, executive director of the Madison Square Park Conservancy, which oversees the square's art program with the city's parks department. "It's Rafael's first U.S. debut of public art."

"Pulse Park" is also the first interactive work that has been staged in the park. On a normal day, Ms. Landau said, about 35,000 people stroll through the space, but she predicts that "Pulse Park" could attract some 500,000 visitors.

"The effect will be similar to minimalist composers like Steve Reich," said Mr. Lozano-Hemmer, 40. "It's not like a disco, but a more calming atmosphere that will envelop the park."

In Trafalgar Square in London, from Nov. 14 to 23, he will be presenting another interactive work, "Under Scan." It will consist of two large-scale projectors that will flood a 20,000-square-foot area with 110,000 lumens of lights that cast a shadow over anyone who walks by. As visitors pass through the space, "video portraits" of other people whom the artists have previously filmed will be projected into the shadows of the passers-by.

Interaction is central to Mr. Lozano-Hemmer's work. "If nobody participates, the projects don't exist," he said. "That's the poetry of them."