

# Los Angeles Times

## Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, 'arguably the world's most important electronic artist,' takes his light show to California for first time

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Most art museums still don't know what to do with it. Art critics still don't know what to call it. More than a decade since the dot-com boom and bust, the field known as new media art, digital art, interactive art or electronic art still occupies a sort of ghetto, with its own biennials, festivals and even its own exhibition centers.

"I work with technology because it's inevitable. Our politics, our culture, our economy, everything is running through globalized networks of communication," says [Rafael Lozano-Hemmer](#), a prominent artist in this field, which he prefers to call "experimental" art. "But these kinds of works are not very popular with art critics. They're seen as a form of gadgetry."

Lozano-Hemmer waved at one of his artworks — a large tank of water rigged to sense your heart rate and create corresponding ripples in the water — as if to prove the point. "This looks like something straight out of a science fair. There's an electrocardiogram, solenoids, a ripple tank — everything about it is nerdy."

The artist was explaining why technology-based art does not always get respect. He was also explaining why he found himself in Irvine at [the Beall Center for Art and Technology](#) and not in a major contemporary art museum for his first solo show in California.

Born in Mexico City and now based in Montreal, Lozano-Hemmer has had major gallery shows in New York and London with Bitforms and Haunch of Venison. He represented Mexico in the 2007 Venice Biennale. He created a Web-based, user-driven light show above English Bay in Vancouver for the 2010 Winter Olympics. This year [the Guardian called him "arguably the world's most famous electronic artist."](#) But he has not had a solo show in California until now.

"It's surprising," says Beall Center curator David Familian, who has shown other tech-savvy, crossover artists like Jennifer and Kevin McCoy and Jim Campbell. "This is a guy who does major public commissions in Europe. You would think that a larger museum with a larger budget would be doing this show instead."

Click here for the [full Arts & Books feature on Lozano-Hemmer](#) and the Irvine show that he calls "a collaboration of people's vital signs."

--Jori Finkel

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*Photo: Artist Raphael Lozano-Hemmer stands in "Pulse Room" at the Beall Center for Art and Technology, at UC Irvine. Credit: Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times*

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