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Abu Dhabi launches light installation based on users' heart rates

By **Lubna Hamdan**

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"Pulse Corniche," an event showcasing a series of artworks by Mexican-Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, will take place on the Abu Dhabi Corniche from January 8 to 17 and is a part of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi's "Seeing Through Light" exhibition.

The artworks at the event will involve the usage of strong robotic search lights which will be projected into the sky. Interestingly, the brightness and direction of the lights will be controlled by the heart rates of the participants.

The first installation of its kind was showcased by the artist at the Venice Bienniale in 2007 and was titled "Pulse Room." It was a room filled with light bulbs suspended from the ceiling, and an interface located at the front of the room.

Each time a participant touched the interface, a computer would detect their heart rate and set off the first light bulb to flash in a rhythm exactly like the participant's heart rate. When the participant let go of the interface, the rhythm would continue from one bulb to another, creating a grid of the heart rate.

From "Pulse Room," Lozano-Hemmer (pictured below) created the installation "Pulse Corniche" especially for Abu Dhabi's exhibition.

Lozano-Hemmer has said that the "Pulse Room" series was inspired by Roberto Gavaldon's film "Macario" (Mexico, 1960) where the leading character goes on a hunger-induced hallucination in which he imagines individuals as flickering candles.

At the event in Abu Dhabi, visitors can participate by holding a sensor that is placed in the centre of the Corniche Plaza. The sensor will then translate the electrical activity of their heart into a distinctive lighting sequence. Thus, the different biometric rhythms of each participant will be projected into the sky.

The artist, who has displayed works in some of the world's top art capitals such as Paris, Venice, and New York City, is known for his usage of interactive platforms for public participation using technology such as robotics.

The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi's exhibition focuses overall on the theme of light as an important principle of art and light shown in different synopsis such as transcendence and reflection.

The exhibition itself begins from the 1960s, the start date of the museum's collection, and unfolds thereafter towards multiple timeframes and artists, showing different art movements and nationalities.

Lozano-Hemmer's artworks were showcased in UN World Summit of Cities in Lyon (2003), the Fifth Anniversary of the Guggenheim Museum in New York (2009), Winter Olympics in Vancouver (2010) and others.

He has received two BAFTA British Academy Awards for Interactive Art in London, a Golden Nica at the Prix Ars Electronica in Austria, as well as many more.

[RLH]

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