Rafael Lozano-Hemmer Playfully Addresses Privacy and Surveillance in an Age of New Technology

ARTSY EDITORIAL
BY NICHOLAS O'BRIEN
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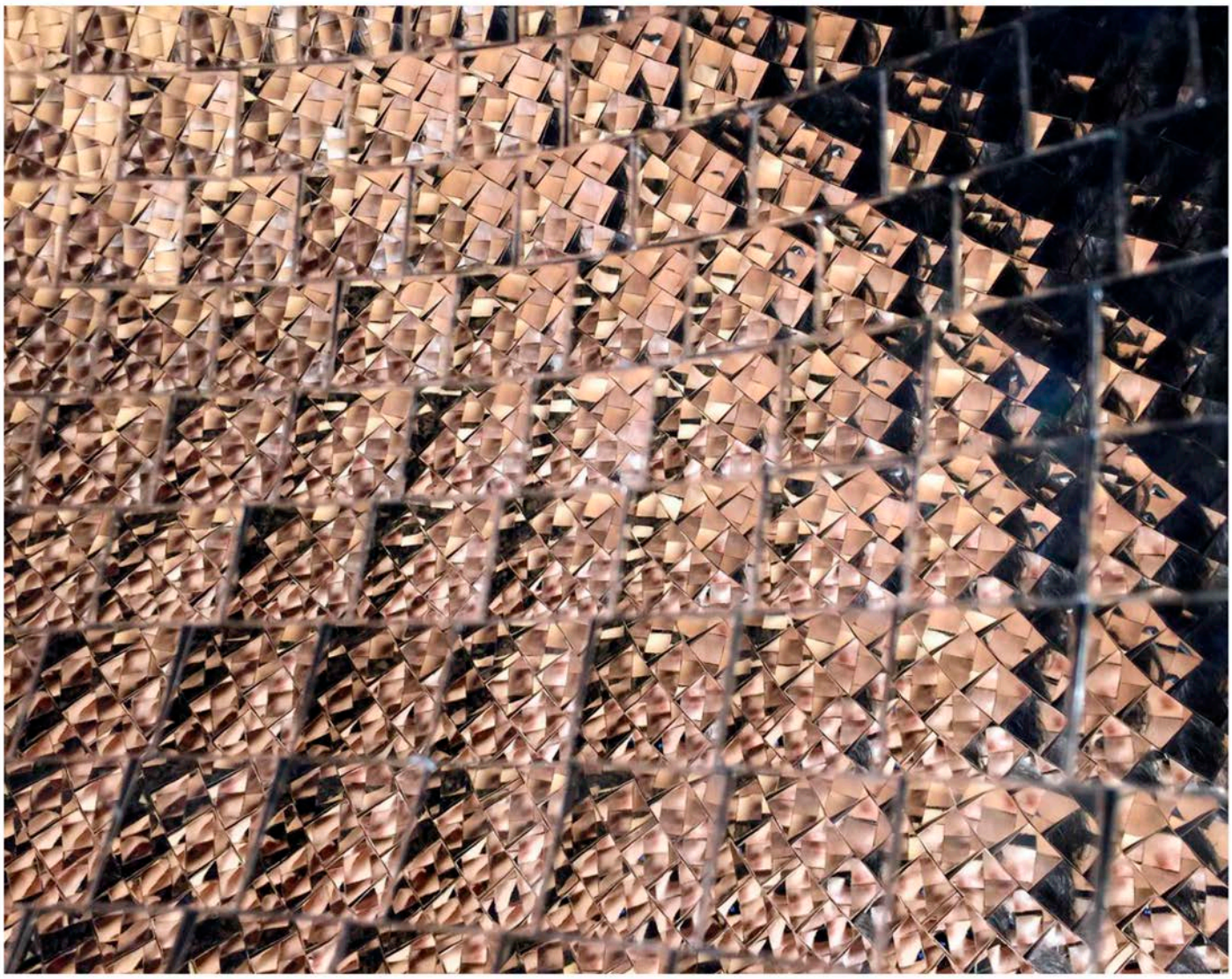

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer
External Interior, 2015
bitforms gallery

In a new exhibition at bitforms gallery, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer asks viewers to consider the socio-political implications of contemporary technology through playful participation. The premiere of a new

[RLH]

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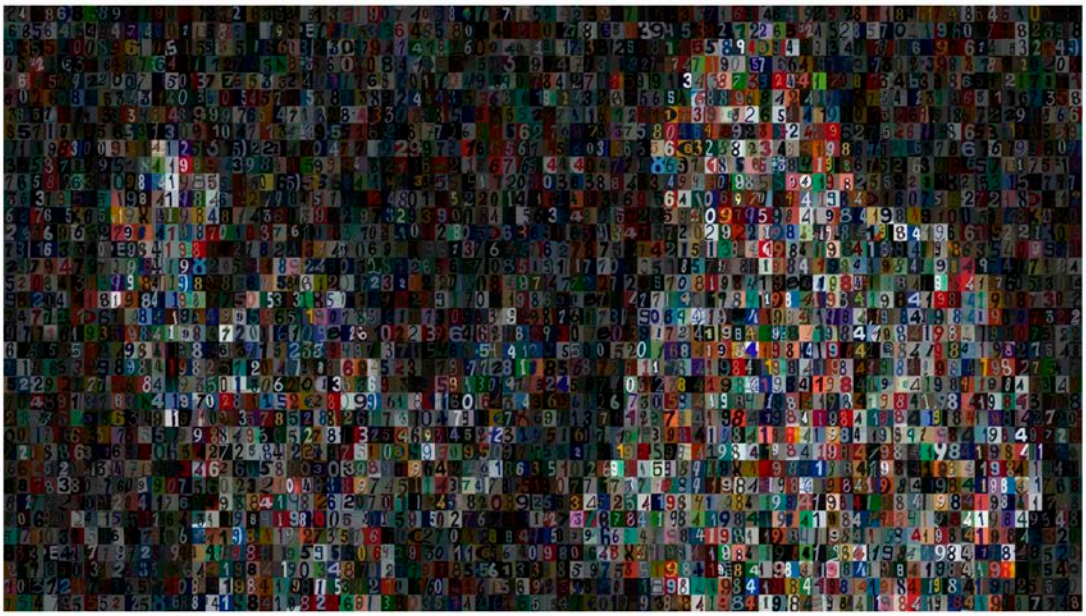
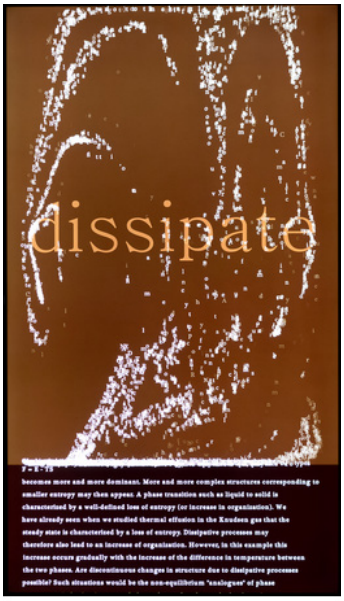
interactive sculpture titled *External Interior* (2015) is perhaps the best indicator of the artist's desire to create what he calls "playful landscapes out of technologies of oppression." The work is a brightly illuminated inside-out disco ball made of 1,600 one-way mirrors mounted on acrylic into which a visitor inserts his or her head. Because the mirrors face inward, participants donning the disco ball are confronted with a wall of fractured images of their own reflection. Meanwhile, other visitors in the gallery can see the person's head inside the ball. As a result, *External Interior* cleverly plays on the tension that comes from watching and being watched.



Rafael Lozano-Hemmer
1984x1984, 2014
bitforms gallery



Rafael Lozano-Hemmer
Airborne 6: Thermodynamics of Irreversible …
bitforms gallery

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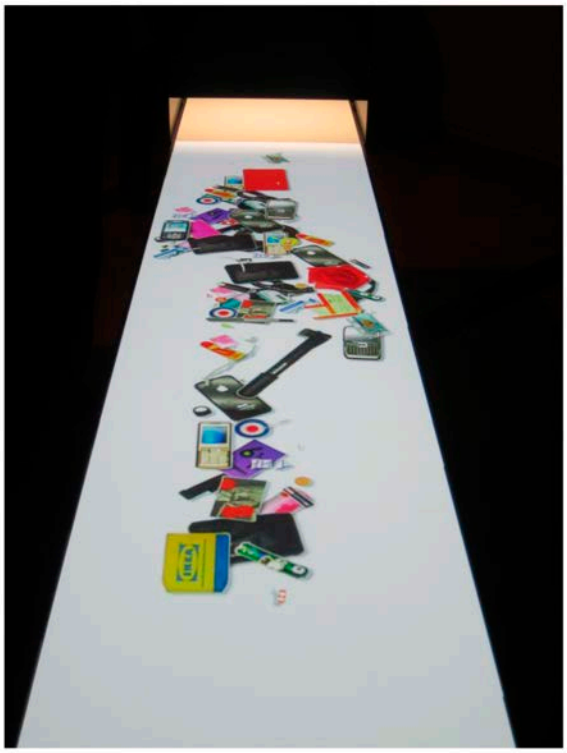
Other new pieces further explore the act and art of being observed or "captured." *Airborne 6: Thermodynamics of Irreversible Processes* (2015) and *1984x1984* (2014), for example, both use motion-tracking technology to trace a viewer on screen. When gallery visitors step in front of a sensor attached to *Airborne 6*, a scrolling text written by Belgian scientist Ilya Prigogine floats into a swirling mass of simulated fluid dynamics on the screen. For *1984x1984*, another screen shows a random pattern of numbers pulled from addresses captured by Google Street View. When audiences step in front of the display, their silhouettes are redrawn with numbers one, nine, eight, and four in a homage to the canonical literary work of George Orwell.



Rafael Lozano-Hemmer
Please Empty Your Pockets, 2010
bitforms gallery

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer
Performance Review HSBC, 2013
bitforms gallery

Please Empty Your Pockets (2010) involves a more nuanced form of participation. At first, the piece appears to be an empty illuminated conveyor belt—the kind one might find at a security checkpoint. Only after visitors have placed an item on the belt to pass underneath a scanner does the piece come alive. Once scanned, the item appears on the other side of the conveyor belt, along with a projection of a small selection of other items that have been scanned and logged over the duration of the exhibition. Meant to look like an airport X-Ray scanner, *Please Empty Your Pockets* becomes a site of collective or collaborative portraiture. Participation in this work not only makes you reflect on those that came before you, it also asks audience members to consider what they choose to share.

—Nicholas O'Brien

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