

Border Tuner's night lights gone; leaves legacy of archived, binational voices, art fund

Vic Kolenc Nov. 29, 2019



Montreal Multimedia artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer talks about his Border Tuner interactive art installation at the El Paso-Juarez, Mexico border. Wochit

The Border Tuner is gone, but its legacy will survive in several forms.

Videos of the hundreds of people talking across the U.S.-Mexico border will live on in a public, online archive; a book about the cross-border interactive art installation will be published next year; and a \$10,000 fund to encourage binational art projects has been established.

Also, Remote Pulse, which allows people to feel another person's heartbeat across the border via internet connections, also is being donated to the cities of El Paso and Juárez. It was part of the Border Tuner project.

The art installation created a surreal canopy of lights over the metal border fence separating the two cities, as people's binational conversations echoed through the night air.



Artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer speaks to people on the Juárez side of the Border Tuner art installation for the opening event Wednesday, Nov. 13, 2019, at Bowie High School in El Paso. (Photo: BRIANA SANCHEZ/EL PASO TIMES)

An estimated 12,000 people went to the Border Tuner sites at Bowie High School in South Central El Paso and at the Chamizal Park in Juárez during the 12-night run, which ended Nov. 24, said international multimedia artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer.

Thousands of people in both cities also viewed the installation from afar as its strong light beams streamed across the border.

Lozano-Hemmer is the [Montreal artist who designed Border Tuner.](https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/2019/10/18/better-border-view-aim-of-montreal-artist-rafael-lozano-hemmers-voice-bridges-in-el-paso-juarez/3948128002/) (/story/news/2019/10/18/better-border-view-aim-of-montreal-artist-rafael-lozano-hemmers-voice-bridges-in-el-paso-juarez/3948128002/) It allowed people to use a dial at talking/listening stations to control 18 powerful searchlights crisscrossing the border. When the searchlights linked, people at the microphones on each side of the border could talk to each other.



The Border Tuner featured 18 searchlights that streamed across the U.S.-Mexico border. (Photo: Monica Lozano)

Lozano-Hemmer said he believes the diversity of voices taking part in Border Tuner proved what he set out to show: This border area is diverse and interconnected.

"Every day was a new surprise. It was touching, provocative, inspiring; it was sad, it was euphoric, it was fun," Lozano-Hemmer said Wednesday from his Montreal studio.

He saw people "singing, flirting, and sharing stories of separation and injustice," he said.

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The binational communications and forums held during the Border Tuner's run were captured on 600 hours of video, which will be curated and put on the Border Tuner [website](https://www.bordertuner.net/) (https://www.bordertuner.net/), probably in about two months, Lozano-Hemmer said.

A book is set to be published next year about the project — with photos, salient statements made during the installation's run, and essays from people who took part in forums and possibly from some people who spoke at the Border Tuner microphones, he said.



Border Pulse, which allows people to feel another person's heartbeat via an internet connection, was part of the Border Tuner interactive art installation in El Paso and Juárez in November. (Photo: Monica Lozano)

The two Remote Pulses that were set up for the Border Tuner run are being donated to El Paso and Juárez and are to be set up at yet-to-be determined locations. Lozano-Hemmer said he prefers they be installed in the downtowns of each city.

Finally, \$10,000 was set aside from the philanthropically funded Border Tuner project to establish what Lozano-Hemmer hopes could become a permanent fund to support regional, binational projects by artists on both sides of the border. A call for artists is to be put out in early 2020. More information will be put on the Border Tuner website in the future.

The fund will be part of the Border Tuner's legacy and make the project more than a "UFO" that landed and left, Lozano-Hemmer said.