

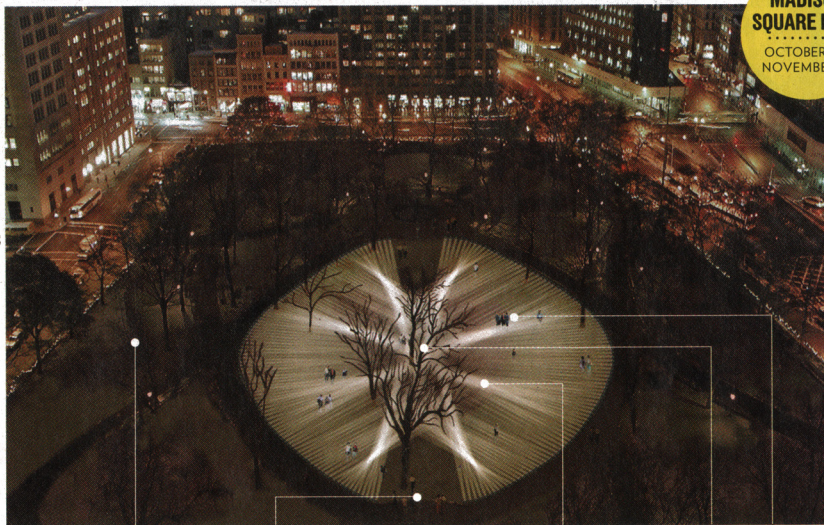
# NEW YORK

## The Annotated Artwork: 'Pulse Park'

How to make the beating heart of New York visible.

**W**HEN YOU WALK up to Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's installation *Pulse Park*, which will be switched on Wednesday evening in Madison Square Park, you register at a kiosk—but instead of giving your name, you record your heartbeat. Two hundred individuals' pulses then become 200 beams of light, forming a blinking, flashing scrim that parkgoers can walk through. Lozano-Hemmer (a Mexican-Canadian who has built such works before, notably Puebla, Mexico's *Pulse Room* and Toronto's *Pulse Front*) spoke to *New York* about the inner workings of his mega-EEG—which, he notes, is not to be used in the event of a cheese-fries-related infarction at the Shake Shack. "It's meant to bring everyone together, to allow people to express some sort of agency in a public space. It's by no means medical."

MIRANDA SIEGEL



MADISON  
SQUARE PARK  
OCTOBER 24-  
NOVEMBER 17

### The Location

"I was originally supposed to do something in lower Manhattan right after 9/11, something uplifting," says Lozano-Hemmer. "But we just couldn't find a site. I liked how people spent time in Madison Square Park, with their burgers and shakes and all the kids running around."

### The Reading

Visitors register their pulses on either of two sets of sensors, one at each end of the oval. "It's a slightly more complex version of the machinery you'd find at the gym," he says. "When the next person has their pulse taken, the first reading is passed on to the adjacent light, and so on until all the lights are pulsing."

### The Timing

*Pulse Park* runs every day from dusk till 11 p.m. "It was important that I do the project in the fall or the winter, because then you have darkness early, and kids can take part. It's not fun to wait until 10 p.m. to try something out."

### The Energy

The park's lights have been turned to face away from the installation, and "we use biodiesel fuel, which is renewable. As I explain it to Canadians, it uses only one-tenth of what it takes to power a typical hockey game."

### The Inspiration

"When my wife was pregnant with twins and you listened to their hearts beating, there was this beautiful syncopation, like minimalist music," he says. "I wanted to expand that into something that could be appreciated visually."

### The Impact

The 1960 film *Macario*, in which the protagonist hallucinates that every person on Earth is represented by a flickering candle, influenced the artist's concept of memorialization. "You see the remains of people who have left their hearts behind."