

## Voice Tunnel, In the Gloaming

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's interactive art foray in New York City's Park Avenue Tunnel

by [David Graver](#) in [Culture](#) on 13 August 2013



For over 80 years, Manhattan's Park Avenue Tunnel has been shuttered to pedestrian traffic. That is, until the Department of Transportation's [Summer Streets](#) program commissioned artist [Rafael Lozano-Hemmer](#) to unveil the space as an interactive light and sound exhibition. [Voice Tunnel](#) stretches across the 1,400 foot long Park Avenue Tunnel dotting the stone walls with 300 theatrical spotlights and 150 loudspeakers. The result is hypnotizing.



Upon scouting the location Lozano-Hemmer realized that viewer participation would offer a personal understanding and ownership of the space. He aimed to deliver that access. "A big part of this project is about how you take spaces that are a part of the infrastructure of this city and personalize them. Instead of a culture of fear and control, you can create a space more about connection, about expression, about relationships," he explained. "In the case of this tunnel, we thought, listen, you can pretty much do anything and it will look great because the tunnel is special, already." With that limitless potential, the artist set out to manipulate the space's cavernous interior.



"Using light, using voice—something that's pretty ephemeral—was a way to respect the historical side of it, highlight it, but allow people personalize it," he said, regarding the synchronized sensory experience. Within the tunnel, loudspeakers match up with arches of light. Triggered by an intercom at the tunnel's center, where a participant records a moment of sound, vocal reverberation and light rapidly wash across the tunnel in either direction. The voice of the participant dictates the intensity of the emanation, but also imprints a light band for future use. With every new participant, older light and sound recordings are pushed further out, banded along the ceiling in parallel lines. Sound reinforces sound, and light expands until darkness settles again. Up to 75 participants voices and their matching light band can exist at once. The piece is forever in motion and no two participants will experience the cascading illumination and echoing voices the same way.





A team of about 30 builds the Voice Tunnel each Friday evening. They work through the night, preparing for the 7AM to 1PM hours of operation. One Saturday, 17 August 2013, remains. Visitors can enter the Voice Tunnel via the Park Avenue Tunnel at 33rd Street and Park Avenue in Manhattan.





*Thank you to [Windows Phone](#) for sponsoring *In the Gloaming on Cool Hunting*. All images for this series, unless otherwise noted, have been shot using the PureView camera on [Nokia Lumia 928](#) and are presented without any retouching.*