

The Park Avenue Voice Tunnel: A Light & Sound Installation

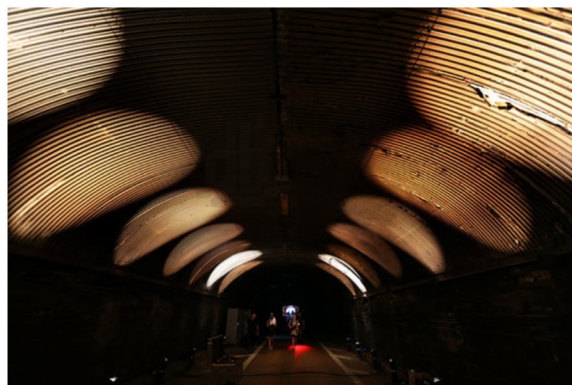
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By Michael Valinsky

Each Saturday, from August 3rd to the 17th, the Park Avenue Tunnel will be open as a Voice Tunnel for pedestrians as part of [Summer Streets](#), an event series during which the Transportation Department curates activities from the Brooklyn Bridge to Central Park.

The tunnel has never yet been open to pedestrians but installation artist [Rafael Lozano-Hemmer](#) has changed the norm by proposing a light and sound installation where anyone can walk through the 1,300 foot-long tunnel between 7:00 AM and 1:00 PM.



The idea for [Voice Tunnel](#) is this:

Visitors are instructed to walk midway through the tunnel and speak into a silver intercom. Whatever they choose to say will travel all over in sound waves and arching light until they fizzle out and disappear. Each person will deliver a message and the speed at which it travels will depend on the pitch of the speaker's words. This emission of sounds creates a quickly changing flux and fusion of sound and light. They appear endless and the light drifts away into nothingness all-the-while never really disappearing.



In an interview with the New York Times, Lozano-Hemmer stated that this project “allows us to remember that we are on earth for a very brief period of time, and then we’re going to die. And it helps us live perhaps more intensely. We’re more alert to the fact that it ends, that we’re getting recycled, that there is a flow.”

Lozano-Hemmer has a point. How easy is it to realize our recyclability in a city where everything is constantly moving, where technology advances faster than the New York City walking pace? The Park Avenue Tunnel allows us to take a minute and stop to listen to ourselves, to all the different voices and sounds that exist around us but that we never actually hear. The tunnel reopens sometime before 5:00 PM, showing no evidence of the installation's existence – very much like Lozano-Hemmer's idea of recyclability.

The artist is extremely involved in large-scale installations that provoke citizens around the world and push them to use public space as a creative, ephemeral and vibrant space. It is important for us New Yorkers to remember that those public spaces exist and Lozano-Hemmer is really good at making this apparent. His work not only creates a community of people but it denounces the alluring aspect of technology and the inevitable pull it has on us – it is one of the only things that brings us together. Not sure whether that's a good or bad thing.

Check out his [website](#) to get a closer look at the other light and sound based installations he has set up.