



# Association for Public Art

Association for Public Art  
(Formerly Fairmount Park Art Association)  
1616 Walnut St., Suite 2012  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
215-546-7550  
associationforpublicart.org

**Press Contacts:**  
Canary Promotion | 215-690-4065  
Megan Wendell, [megan@canarypromo.com](mailto:megan@canarypromo.com)  
Carolyn Huckabay, [carolyn@canarypromo.com](mailto:carolyn@canarypromo.com)

**High-resolution images on request and online at:**  
[canarypromo.com/openair](http://canarypromo.com/openair)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**August 23, 2012**

## **Technology Meets Public Art in Spectacular Interactive Light Experience**

*Internationally celebrated artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer presents the world premiere of Open Air, illuminating the night sky with Philadelphia's voices, Sept. 20-Oct. 14*

PHILADELPHIA — Combining public art with mobile technology, Mexican-Canadian artist **Rafael Lozano-Hemmer** will present the world premiere of **Open Air, Sept. 20–Oct. 14**. Commissioned by the [Association for Public Art](#) (aPA, formerly Fairmount Park Art Association), [Open Air](#) is a spectacular interactive light experience directed by participants' voices and GPS locations, illuminating the night sky from Philadelphia's historic Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The project is funded in part by the inaugural round of the [Philadelphia Knight Arts Challenge](#) and presented in conjunction with the [2012 Philadelphia Live Arts Festival](#) and the [2012 DesignPhiladelphia Festival](#).

Inspired by the city's rich tradition of democracy and respect for free speech, *Open Air* was created specifically for Philadelphia and for participation by the general public. Using a **free mobile app** developed by Lozano-Hemmer's studio, participants are invited to record and submit messages of up to 30 seconds in length — shout-outs, poems, songs, rants, dedications, proposals. In response, **24 powerful robotic searchlights**, stationed strategically along a half-mile section of the Parkway, will create a **unique, dynamic light formation in the sky**. The lights will react in brightness and position to the GPS location of the participants and the frequency and amplitude of their voice recording, which can be heard through the app, the project website and public speakers located at the Project Information Center. The free "Open Air Philly" app will be available from the iTunes store starting Sept. 20.

Priority will be given to those submitting messages from the Parkway, but for those not onsite, the **project website, which has launched today at [www.openairphilly.net](http://www.openairphilly.net)**, will allow users to record messages that will be archived and played back by the lights if other web visitors rate them highly. All participants will have a personalized webpage created automatically with their message, comments and images of the light sculptures that their voice created. **The messages with the highest ratings online will be featured during the Opening Night Celebration.**

"This project is meant to be a new public space for Philadelphians to express themselves," says Lozano-Hemmer, who is globally acclaimed for his large-scale interactive art experiences, including the well-known 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics installation [Vectorial Elevation](#). Thousands of individuals will be able to

participate onsite and online during the project's duration, and hundreds of thousands more will experience the project as viewers. Lozano-Hemmer's interest "is to create intimacy and not intimidation. While the project will be spectacular in scale, what matters to me is that individual participants can personalize their city with their contributions. *Open Air* is at once a visible voicemail system, a rant line, a public stage and an archive of recordings from Philadelphia's past and present."

Says Association for Public Art Executive Director **Penny Bach**, "The Association is dedicated to innovation and to creating opportunities for artists to respond to the issues of our time, while redefining public space and encouraging public engagement and interaction. Our interest in the potential of new media as a framework for public art on an urban scale led us to Rafael, who is recognized internationally as a major figure in the evolving understanding of technology as a creative force. We're excited to bring him to Philadelphia to create a work that will transform the skyline, engage the public in a unique experience, and bring international attention to the city."

Depending on atmospheric conditions, *Open Air* will be seen up to 10 miles away from the Parkway each evening from 8 to 11 p.m. The **Project Information Center at Eakins Oval** (24th Street and the Parkway) will be equipped with app download, free mobile loan stations and seating areas for watching the lights and listening to the messages. There will also be an Information Outpost located at Sister Cities Park (18th Street and Logan Square).

The *Open Air* voice archive will also feature selected "**Voices of Philly**," recorded messages from distinct individuals past and present who have inspired and influenced the flavor of Philadelphia. "Voices of Philly" messages will be accessible on the *Open Air* website and will be played at various times throughout the project. Content for "Voices of Philly" was curated and produced by project partner [WHYY](#)'s Executive Producer of Audio Content **Elisabeth Perez-Luna**, in consultation with the artist and the Association for Public Art. "It's natural to be part of this project," says Perez-Luna. "We at WHYY are in many ways the oral historians of Philadelphia." WHYY is Philadelphia's NPR news station (90.9 FM).

### **OPENING NIGHT CELEBRATION**

The Opening Night Celebration is a **FREE** public event that will take place **Sept. 20, 7:30–11 p.m.**, on the closed inner drive of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The celebration, presented in cooperation with the City of Philadelphia's Department of Parks & Recreation, will include a selection of local food trucks, a live countdown and ceremonial lighting, with a presentation by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, virtuoso voice performances and other special guests. In addition, the winner of an online message-recording contest will be announced; the winning message will be the first public voice to activate the searchlights.

The artist will also be participating in a **Meet the Artist Reception, 6–7:30 p.m.**, at **The Clubhouse at Park Towne Place Apartments** (2200 Benjamin Franklin Parkway) prior to the Opening Night Celebration. Tickets for this event (Patrons, \$250; Young Friends, \$100) can be purchased online at [www.associationforpublicart.org/open-air](http://www.associationforpublicart.org/open-air).

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **How do I participate?**

Download the free “Open Air Philly” app from the iTunes store starting Sept. 20, and use it to submit a message. Your submission will be entered into a queue; when your message is ready to activate the searchlights, the app will notify you. Alternately, visit the project website, [www.openairphilly.net](http://www.openairphilly.net), starting August 23, to submit a message online or to rate, listen to and search for previously submitted messages.

### **What should I say?**

Anything you want: a dedication, shout-out, poem, quote, rant, song, proposal or question. Your message will be listened to and rated by the general public, so you may want to ensure the content is inspiring, interesting, poetic, critical, funny or informative.

### **How does the message play back?**

The 24 searchlights create a modulating arrangement in the sky that responds to your voice’s frequency, amplitude and the location of your smartphone. The way the lights react will be in sync with the voice recording, which can be heard through the app, the project website and public speakers at the Project Information Center and the Project Outpost. In addition, since every message will be archived on the Open Air website, messages can be accessed and searched online.

### **What’s the difference between onsite and online messages?**

A message sent from the Parkway using the “Open Air Philly” app is given priority in the project’s queue, as participants can see their resulting designs in real time in the sky. During the playback of an onsite submitted message, all the lights will point toward the participant’s location, giving him or her a privileged viewpoint. A message submitted at [www.openairphilly.net](http://www.openairphilly.net), on the other hand, plays back only when there are no live messages in the project’s queue. During the playback of an online message, the lights are arranged in pre-determined designs that can be seen from most vantage points. The project queue will also feature the “Voices of Philly” at various times during the run of the project.

### **Who is included in the “Voices of Philly”?**

Distinct individuals both past and present who have inspired and influenced the flavor of Philadelphia will be included in “Voices of Philly.” Content for “Voices of Philly” will be produced by project partner WHYY executive producer Elisabeth Perez-Luna, in consultation with the artist and the Association for Public Art.

### **What is the environmental impact of the project?**

The entire month-long project uses less power than a single football game and is run on more than 50 percent renewable biodiesel fuel. While the searchlights are the brightest in the world, light is concentrated into narrow beams that are never pointed toward neighboring buildings, flight paths or sensitive ecological areas. The lateral light pollution generated by the beams is much smaller than any street light, advertisement or corporate logo found on any of Philadelphia’s buildings. The lights move slowly, creating

a contemplative and silent environment. The artist is also working closely with Audubon Pennsylvania to ensure that bird migration patterns are not affected.

**RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER** (b. 1967, Mexico City) is an internationally recognized Mexican-Canadian artist currently living in Montreal. He has produced large-scale interactive art installations across the globe, including the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics, the 2010 Light in Winter Festival in Melbourne, Australia, and the 50th Anniversary of the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2009. His work in kinetic sculpture, responsive environments, video installation and photography has been shown in museums and biennials in four-dozen countries. He also represented Mexico in the 2007 Venice Biennale. Concurrent with *Open Air*, Lozano-Hemmer will have an exhibition of his work on display at New York City's [bitforms gallery](#) and the San Francisco [Museum of Modern Art](#). [lozano-hemmer.com](#)

**THE ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC ART** (aPA, formerly Fairmount Park Art Association) commissions, preserves, promotes and interprets public art in Philadelphia. Since its founding in 1872, aPA has worked with artists, communities and civic leaders to make encounters with art a part of everyday life, creating a Museum Without Walls that is free and accessible to residents and visitors. As the nation's first private nonprofit organization dedicated to integrating public art and urban planning, aPA has an unparalleled and pioneering history, characterized by artistic excellence, creative initiative, collaboration and civic engagement. Working closely with city agencies, aPA remains today a central resource and contributor to Philadelphia's enduring reputation as an important place to view and experience the evolution of public art. Through aPA's free, interactive public programs, website and publications, Philadelphians and visitors are invited to experience civic spaces enlivened by artists and art; to discover the city's vast collection of public art; and to connect to a shared cultural legacy. [associationforpublicart.org](#)

**PHILADELPHIA LIVE ARTS FESTIVAL** features performances by renowned contemporary performing artists from the U.S. and around the world who are selected and invited to the Festival by Producing Director Nick Stuccio. The Philly Fringe is an unfiltered Festival, where new and established artists of all kinds present their own work, free of a selection process. Together, the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival and Philly Fringe, this year held Sept. 7–22, establish Philadelphia as a city bursting with wild creativity, bringing audiences 16 days of the most stimulating, provocative new art being created in Philadelphia, across the U.S. and around the world. *PNC Arts Alive is the 2012 Presenting Sponsor of the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival and Philly Fringe*. [livearts-fringe.org](#)

**DESIGNPHILADELPHIA** demonstrates, supports and promotes the ability that design has to generate innovation, solve problems, enhance daily life, and influence both the perception and economics of the region. From Oct.10–14, 2012, the eighth annual DesignPhiladelphia Festival, in partnership with The University of the Arts, will place a spotlight on the city's rich design history and creative industries at work. The citywide Festival will feature five days of nonstop programming championing design, showcasing the work of more than 400 designers and creative thinkers in more than 100 public events. Programs – a diverse mix of exhibitions, lectures and public forums, runway shows, book signings, parties, workshops and open studios – cross design disciplines and highlight the impact design plays in our everyday lives. [designphiladelphia.org](#)

**PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS** of *Open Air* include: the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts; the City of Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy; Audubon Pennsylvania, Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPTMC); Center City District; Parkway Council Foundation; Canadian and Mexican Consulates; Mexican Cultural Center; Park Towne Place Apartments - an Aimco Community; Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Rodin Museum; The Victory Foundation; Independence Foundation; WHYY; Metro Philadelphia; Tierney; Expert Events; Catering By Design, and individual donors, among others.

###

**To request high-resolution images, interviews and more information on *Open Air*, please contact:**

Canary Promotion | 215-690-4065

Megan Wendell, [megan@canarypromo.com](mailto:megan@canarypromo.com)

Carolyn Huckabay, [carolyn@canarypromo.com](mailto:carolyn@canarypromo.com)