



Association
for Public Art

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High-resolution images on request and online at:
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THE FRANKLIN INSTITUTE

MEDIA ADVISORY
FOR TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2012

“Planetarium on the Parkway” a once-in-a-lifetime stargazing opportunity

Open Air artist *Rafael Lozano-Hemmer* and Franklin Institute Chief Astronomer *Derrick Pitts* collaborate on unique astronomy event on the Ben Franklin Parkway on October 2; Open Air on view through Oct. 14

WHO: The Association for Public Art and The Franklin Institute

WHAT: Planetarium on the Parkway

WHEN: Tuesday, October 2, 2012
8:30 p.m.
FREE

WHERE: *Open Air Project Information Center at Eakins Oval*
24th Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway
More information at associationforpublicart.org/planetarium or 215-546-7550

On **Tuesday, October 2**, the **Association for Public Art** (aPA) and **The Franklin Institute** (TFI) will present a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for stargazers with **Planetarium on the Parkway**. This unique, interactive and FREE presentation will employ the technology of artist **Rafael Lozano-Hemmer**'s aPA-commissioned world-premiere public art installation, **Open Air**, to highlight constellations in the night sky.

TFI Chief Astronomer **Derrick Pitts** will host the event, directing *Open Air*'s 24 powerful robotic searchlights into the sky to point out stellar objects above Philadelphia's Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Though the project is typically controlled by individual voices via a website (openairphilly.net) and iPhone app, Lozano-Hemmer has designed a special interface that will turn the control over to Pitts. This interface will use an iPad to move the lights and accurately pinpoint locations in the sky without the "parallax" line-of-sight problems that are typical of outdoor astronomy events. Planetarium on the Parkway is a free event, and amateur astronomers are welcome to bring their telescopes. Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Astronomical Society, one of the nation's oldest astronomy clubs, will also have two large telescopes on hand for viewers to gaze through.

Since *Open Air*'s Opening Night Celebration on Sept. 20, which brought more than 3,000 visitors to the Parkway, the project's app has been downloaded more than 2,000 times, and its accompanying website has received over 30,000 unique visitors. So far, more than **2,500 messages have been recorded**, giving *Open Air* 10-plus hours of material to be translated into unique light patterns.

Addressing the astronomy community's concerns about *Open Air's* environmental impact, Pitts says Planetarium on the Parkway is a "teachable moment": "To me, [the searchlights] look like the laser pointers we all use at star parties to point out astronomical objects," Pitts says. "Why not use the lights for this purpose in the open air — a live planetarium show on the Parkway where the lights are used to point out what can be seen, and illustrate how the wrong kind of lighting destroys our ability to see, share and enjoy the natural beauty of a light-pollution-free night sky?"

Adds **Penny Balkin Bach**, executive director of the Association for Public Art, "*Open Air* has presented this rare opportunity to bring art and science together in an unexpected collaboration."

Lozano-Hemmer has successfully staged projects with interactive lights in cities all over the world, including two collaborations with NASA. *Open Air*, whose lateral light pollution is smaller than any street light, is a community-minded project intended to bring people together for shared experiences, and increase civic engagement by creating a platform for individuals and community groups to be heard. *Open Air* is on view nightly from 8 to 11 p.m. through Oct. 14. For more information, visit associationforpublicart.org and openairphilly.net.

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC ART

Formerly Fairmount Park Art Association, the Association for Public Art 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. For more information, visit associationforpublicart.org.

ABOUT THE FRANKLIN INSTITUTE

Located in the heart of Philadelphia, The Franklin Institute is a renowned and innovative leader in the field of science and technology learning, as well as a dynamic center of activity. Pennsylvania's most visited museum, it is dedicated to creating a passion for learning about science by offering access to hands-on science education. For more information, visit fi.edu.

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