

We learn from the past to understand the future

How Cedric Omtzigt turned a harmless new media installation into an uncanny experience.



Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's motion-tracking creation, "1984x1984, Shadow Box 10", 2015.

When given the chance to create an avatar in a video-game, people often recreate themselves the best that they can. Now what if a computer would do this process for you? It would surely save a lot of time now that a computer will try to tweak all the settings for you with almost no effort at an immense speed. But there's also a catch.

Lets start at the beginning of it all. The original installation was called “1984x1984” by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, created in 2014. The installation consisted of an Ultra HD 4K display with a tracking system attached to the side. The screen displays thousands of images of home addresses between 0 and 9, which were extracted from Google Street View. The numbers feature a wide variety of fonts, colours and styles. The variety of the displayed numbers is a key factor in what makes this art installation appealing.



Numbers outside of the silhouette, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, "1984x1984, Shadow Box 10", 2015.



Numbers inside of the silhouette, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, "1984x1984, Shadow Box 10", 2015.

When the viewer stands in front of the display, their silhouette is limited to continuous rows of the numbers 1, 9, 8, 4 as you can see in the image above. On Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s own site, he mentions that the piece was made as a 30 year tribute to the dystopian novel 1984, written by George Orwell.



Rafael Lozano-Hemmer himself

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, a Mexican-Canadian electronic artist born in 1967. In his projects he makes use of a wide range of technology, involving robotics, projections, sensors, LED's, cameras and tracking systems.

Cedric Omtzigt's installation: "Another You" was created with Lozano-Hemmer's artwork in mind. Omtzigt himself has confirmed that he was inspired by his work and it is clearly represented in the newest installation. His installation uses a camera with motion tracking to track the movement of your facial features and Displays live feed video of your movements with a character that looks almost like you. The almost-human-like resemblance is what creates a creepy effect when you look at your own character. This is called the uncanny valley, which is a point where an animate object is on the border of looking real and fake. Such images or videos give people the creeps and this is exactly what Cedric Omtzigt wanted to achieve. He even went a step further to print out a small picture of your character on a piece of film to take home. Because who wouldn't want a creepy version of themselves in your room right?



Luisa Whitton, 2019 Muse Magazine, 'Modern Workers'



Creepy Girl

In a later interview with Cedric Omtzigt he was asked several questions regarding his artwork. We got to ask him one question during this interview.

Care to explain the meaning of the work?

“I find that the user or viewer should create the meaning for themselves but if you were to ask me, I would say that the artist is showing us how far technology has come in a bit of an unsettling way. To me it looks like the artwork was a successful adaption from its predecessor as it quickly became an event that people were desperately willing to queue up for” – Cedric Omtzigt

I agree that Cedric Omtzigt has definitely created an intriguing artwork that quickly became popular, but to me it looks like the installation has overshoot its intended use. People now visit the installation to get a cool creepy version of themselves and aren't interested in the deeper meaning behind the work. And you know what, that's totally fine! The fact that people are showing increased interest in tech art events is a great sign because it might pull in potential future artists who will one day also have their very own installation.

People having fun with technology and exploring the possibilities is what we need to keep media art events going, and with innovating artists like Cedric Omtzigt the installations will only evolve and create experiences like never before.

- *“Interesting read and easy to follow” – Rene van Koolwijk*
- *“Clear information presented in a pleasant way” – Jasper Sebastian*

