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Information to Build On

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Electrifying Public Art at the Ritz

Walking through the Financial District past Robert F. Wagner Park toward the Museum of Jewish Heritage, strollers might notice a shadow walking next to them. But the shadow is not theirs, nor anyone else's. It's an illusion created by electronic artist Jim Campbell in his

work *Primal Graphics 2002*. On display through late September at the Ritz-Carlton Battery Park, *Primal Graphics 2002* is the first installation of "Art on the Plaza," a new public art series showcasing works from forty contemporary artists. The series is produced by Creative Time, a non-profit public arts presenter, in cooperation with the Battery Park City Authority.

In *Primal Graphics 2002*, which is best viewed at night, 386 light bulbs flicker onto two 10 x 13 foot screens, projecting two different images depending on the time of day. One is of a human silhouette that appears to be perpetually walking, running and then falling, the other of a streetscape that glides around a fixed vantage point.

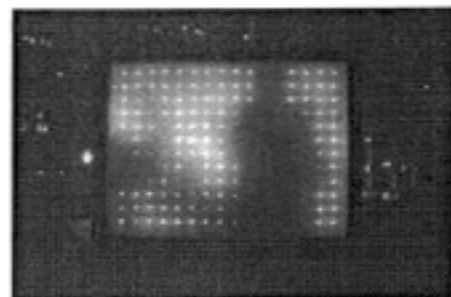
Although Campbell created the piece before September 11, the work has new meaning for people in Lower Manhattan. "This work brings a certain amount of energy to an area that was low on energy and down in a lot of ways," said Campbell, who believes that public art can have a positive impact on Lower Manhattan by "unifying people, bringing people there and allowing them to think about things in different and new ways."

To create the images, Campbell used video-image processing, a digital technology that transforms live action into millions of pixels. A pioneer in multimedia and video art, Campbell holds more than a dozen patents in video-image processing and is a past recipient of the Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art (SECA) award for electronic media. Commissioned by Creative Time, *Primal Graphics 2002* was selected from more than forty proposals by a committee of representatives from the Battery Park City Authority and Millennium Partners, the real-estate company that owns the Ritz-Carlton, Battery Park.

"[In selecting Campbell] we wanted to build a connection between Battery Park City's historic commitment to public art with contemporary art practice," said Anne Pasternak, Creative Time's Executive Director. "The themes of his work are timeless and accessible, yet presented with new technology, which gives the work a certain amount of freshness."

Campbell believes public art has new relevance for New Yorkers. "Since September 11, people are reconnecting with how important the City is to them and recognize the arts as an important part of that," she said. "Seeing something you wouldn't normally see is a very New York experience."

Creative Time has been a long-time supporter of public arts in Lower Manhattan. Through its "Art on the Beach" program launched in 1978, the organization has presented works at 88 Pine Street, the U.S. Custom House, the Battery Maritime Museum and the Battery Park Landfill. More recently, it helped produce the *Tribute in Light* memorial to honor those who died on September 11. The group is currently working in cooperation with the World Financial Center Arts & Events program on an installation by four contemporary musical artists. That exhibit is slated to open in the World Financial Center Winter Garden on October 17.



The next installation in the "Art on the Plaza" series, *Back of Snowman* by Gary Hume, is scheduled to be unveiled on October 8. For more information on Creative Time and their public art projects throughout New York City, [visit their website](http://www.creativetime.org).