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LIGHT BEARERS

INTERACTIVE ART INSTALLATION

Montreal Insectarium



Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2015

Multimedia artists Mathieu Le Sourd (Maotik) and Étienne Paquette were challenged by the administrators of the Montreal Insectarium: to reproduce the environment of a beautiful summer night, illuminated by hundreds of fireflies. Inspired by this unprecedented subject, the artists have imagined an interactive installation combining art with science, some sort of a poetic dialogue between visitors and virtual fireflies. They have solicited the expertise of XYZ to provide technical direction and to contribute to the design of the interactive experience Light Bearers.

Photo credit: Adrien Williams

Description

In order to recreate the bioluminescence of fireflies, their ability to produce light through a chemical process, XYZ artists and experts have used the principle of fluorescence. Bulbs were filled with tonic water, which contains quinine, a natural alkaloid that reacts to ultraviolet rays from light beams. In the first part of the experiment, nearly 2,500 light bulbs attached to metal rods recall a mysterious natural environment. A little further, in the main area, stumps were used to integrate infrared sensors movement activated. Visitors can thus manipulate light beams by approaching or moving their hands away from the stump, which causes light flashes and triggers a soundtrack. The participants, surrounded by a cloud of “fireflies”, then become light bearers.

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