



Rafaël Rozendaal Takes Over Times Square with Two Kissing Faces

By Leander Roet (/author/LeanderRoet) — Feb 3 2015

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This article originally appeared (<http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/nl/blog/rafal-rozendaal-neemt-times-square-over-met-twee-zoenende-gezichten>) on The Creators Project Netherlands.



Much Better Than This, Rafaël Rozendaal, 2015. Photos by Ka-Man Tse, via @TsqArts
(<https://twitter.com/tsqarts>)

Sunday, February 1st. 11:57 PM: the electric billboards on Times Square go dark for a moment, only to come alive again a couple seconds later with the colored silhouettes of two faces. At first they appear shy, but later they move closer and give each other a passionate kiss. Rafaël Rozendaal's *Midnight Moment* has begun.

Known as *Much Better Than This*, the video artwork by the 34-year-old Dutch-Brazilian internet artist will be shown on Times Square every midnight of the entire month of February. "We're bombarded with negativity throughout the day, it's good to give love some attention on the biggest screens in the world," Rozendaal explained to The Creators Project. It's a message of love that couldn't come at a better time in the bitter cold of this Valentine's month.

Rozendaal's artwork is the second *Midnight Moment* to appear in Times Square this year, following Sebastian Errazuriz's *A Pause in the City That Never Sleeps* (<http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/nl/blog/times-square-is-yawning-thanks-to-sebastian-errazuriz>). We spoke to Rafaël Rozendaal about the honor of taking over one of the busiest squares in the world, and how he expects New Yorkers to react to his kissing faces.



GIF courtesy the artist

The Creators Project: Can you tell us a bit more about the *Midnight Moment* initiative?

Rafaël Rozendaal: *Midnight Moment* is an ongoing public art project on Times Square in New York. Every month one video artwork is selected which will be shown on almost all billboards on Times Square for three minutes at during midnight. Those three minutes are donated by the Times Square Coalition. The work I've

selected as my *Midnight Moment* is called *Much Better Than This* (<http://www.muchbetterthanthis.com>), an online video artwork I did in 2006. It's a rather simple image: two faces who briefly wait and then briefly kiss. With each kiss the faces change color.

What's the story behind *Much Better Than This*? Or is it just what it is?

There is no story. You see two faces and they kiss each other. I always make my work from my own interests, but I don't have a particular narrative in mind. I wanted to make this, so I did.



Why did you specifically chose this work as your *Midnight Moment*?

Times Square is an incredibly busy place, so I wanted to chose a work that would be instantly recognizable. I wanted the public to realize that this is an independent work, free from its surroundings. The artwork is on its own. A lot of my other works are pretty abstract and wouldn't get noticed as much as this one, it might get lost in the clutter more easily. Moreover, I think we're bombarded with negativity throughout the day, so it's important to give love some attention on the biggest screens in the world.

Do you think the meaning of the work changes with the context of this physical location ? Or is it the same to you as an online canvas?

I think the meaning of an artwork always differs, per person, per time of the year and per country. I often compare internet art to music. Just like music you can experience internet art at home, by yourself, but it is also really flexible and can be shown on a gigantic screen. Just like music you can experience it in a stadion or at home, with a headset on.

What's your opinion of Times Square on a normal day? And how does this change during the *Midnight Moments*?

I went to see Times Square a couple of times at night and I was surprised to see how people experienced it. It struck me to see that in the summer, people actually sit down to watch commercials with their friends. How cool would it be if all advertising was like that, concentrated in one place? No advertising in the city, expect on Times Square. No commercials on TV, expect on the advertising channel. In that light *Midnight Moment* is really special because people don't expect it. You can see them getting confused. Just as with online art the context is ambigue... there is no museum so it's immediately clear you're watching art. People really have to form their own opinions then, and that's what makes it so interesting.

How do you think the people on the street will react? Are you secretly hoping Times Square will turn into a kissing orgy?

Yes, that's a great idea! I'm expecting a lot of kiss-selfies.





Visit Times Square Arts (<http://www.timessquarenyc.org/times-square-arts/projects/midnight-moment/much-better-than-this/index.aspx>) to see *Midnight Moment* (on display through February 28), and go to Rafaël Rozendaal's website (<http://www.newrafael.com/>) for more work.

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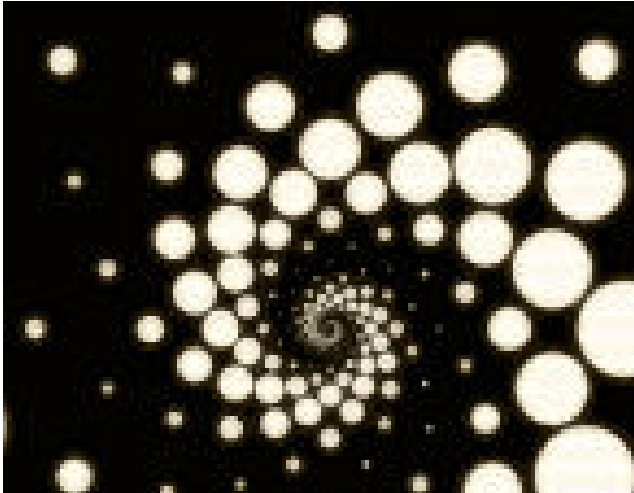
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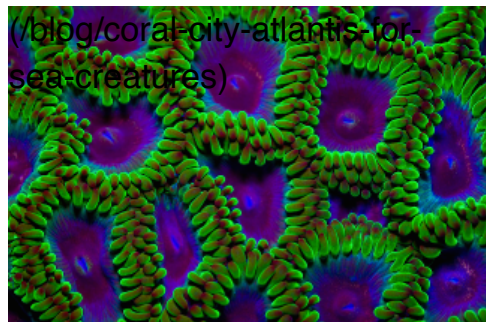


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