A 35-Mile Laser Rainbow Illuminates New York As A Memorial To Sandy’s Victims

The laser-beamed art project by artist Yvette Mattern is powerful enough to cross from Manhattan to the storm-devastated neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Queens, providing a little hope to still-recovering communities that calm is on the way.

Last night, New Yorkers looking up into the cloudy sky saw something quite out of the ordinary. Streaming across the skyline was a crisp rainbow, pointing from Manhattan’s west side and headed southeast toward the Rockaways. Pedestrians stopping to snap photos might have been excused in thinking it was a strange natural phenomenon, or some new viral marketing campaign. But the lights—which will be seen for the next two nights over the city, were in fact a memorial for the victims of Hurricane Sandy.

The project, called Global Rainbow After the Storm, by artist Yvette Mattern, is situated in the Standard Hotel, on the High Line. It points toward the devastated coast of Brooklyn. If conditions are right, the lights—which are projected from lasers—can be seen for 35 miles, so should extend far past the still-recovering areas and far out to sea. These photos were snapped by Drew Anthony Smith, our online photo editor.

The project wasn’t built specifically for the city (it’s been on display across Europe, including at the London Olympics), but the rainbow-themed lights seemed to be a perfect symbol of hope and restoration after a storm. “I hope that seeing this beacon in the night sky will provide people with a sense of peace and security in this time of crisis and that it will unify us with its presence so we remember that we are all in this together,” Mattern said in a press release, “regardless of divisions of class, race, religion, and culture.”

The project, which is designed to draw donations to Waves for Water and the New York Foundation for the Arts’ Emergency Relief Fund, will run for the nights of November 28 and 29.

[Images: Drew Anthony Smith/Fast Company]