

COMPLEXART+DESIGN



Interview: Marco Brambilla Talks New “Anthropocene” Film Installation and the Future of the Moving Image

By: Cedar Pasori

Published: September 27, 2013



Marco Brambilla has been making video pieces since the '90s that challenge our ideas of materiality, creation, destruction, time, and everyday life. For his latest piece, titled *Anthropocene*, he examines New York City in a site specific film installation, where the view of Central Park from Columbus Circle is spectacularly reimagined from multiple angles.

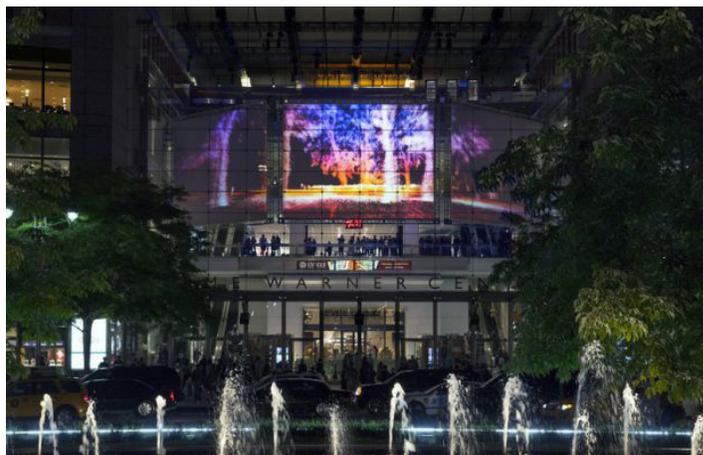
We spoke to him about *Anthropocene* (which was commissioned by HUGO BOSS and is supported by the Art Production Fund and the Central Park Conservancy), his previous pieces (such as Kanye West's “Power” video), and his upcoming projects. You can view the piece online and in New York through September 30, 2013 at the HUGO BOSS flagship store in Columbus Circle from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

For *Anthropocene*, how did you approach making a site specific installation in a retail environment?

It was a commission that came from HUGO BOSS, and it was very open. I wanted to make it a site specific installation based on the idea of being precisely between Central Park and New York City and how those two states interact psychologically, geographically, and visually. It felt like the right thing to do—replacing the view through the window of Time Warner Center with a surrogate, synthetic view of traveling through the park. From the very beginning, I always intended it to be site specific and about Columbus Circle and Central Park.

How does this project differ from or continue your 2011 piece for HUGO BOSS, KINO?

I worked with them before, and that was a very different project—an experimental, interactive film, which was meant to exist online. That had a much narrower brief at the beginning; it was more of an assignment. This is really the first time I worked with the company in terms of being commissioned to make a work that was essentially very open and could be any kind of installation, material, or subject matter. In that respect, this one was more satisfying. I had a lot more freedom to express what I wanted to express about New York. I'm very obsessed with the energy of New York and the idea of the way people behave in the city versus the way they behave in a natural environment. That inspired me to find a way to visualize Central Park in a different way.



Were you at the initial viewing on September 24? How did you see people reacting to the piece?

I was very pleased to see people connecting to the work on many different levels. A lot of people were reacting to it as a spectacle, because it's a very large-scale installation that dominates the atrium. It's quite a large atrium (it's about 150-foot high x 100-foot wide), and the screens are pretty gigantic. For a week, there's this giant video object inside the atrium, so it has an element of spectacle to it, but at the same time, it's also quite intimate in terms of the journey through the park being from a person's point of view—from an eye height. You're being taken on this journey in a very epic projection, but you're seeing quite a bit of detail and quite a bit of proximity to the elements of Central Park itself.

You recently showed *Creation* at St. Patrick's Old Cathedral in New York in 3D. What was the impact of showing that film in the context of a religious building, with a live choir, and in 3D?

I showed *Civilization* two years ago at the same cathedral, and I wanted to show the new piece there, as well. It was shown at Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery in New York, Christopher Grimes Gallery in Los Angeles, and at the museum SITE Santa Fe museum, so this was actually the fourth showing. In the church, it functions more as an installation. You're in this context with a live choir, and it becomes much more of a performance as opposed to just watching a video as you would in a gallery.

It was absolutely perfect. I love the idea of bringing my work to the general public, not just people who go to gallery openings. Both projects at St. Patrick's and Time Warner Center are essentially public art projects, and at cathedral, we had 3,000-4,000 people show up to see a video installation for one night only in a space that's not specifically an art space. It's very satisfying for me to have people who might not necessarily go to museums or galleries be exposed to public art this way, especially to video art, because there's always been more of a museum context for video art.



You worked with Kanye West on *Power* and Natasha Poly on *Ghost*. Do you plan to do more collaborations with celebrities in the future or were those more organic, one-time projects? How have you found that working with a famous or influential person affects your constant exploration of time, everyday life, the city, nature, etc.?

It always boils down to the sensibility of the people involved, whether I'm working with a celebrity, musician, or being commissioned by a brand. If you share certain sensibilities, then it's going to be a very successful

collaboration. If it's done for inorganic reasons, then often it's not creatively successful.

I was lucky with the Kanye West video. Kanye and I had lots of conversations before I even came up with the concept, in terms of what the album meant to him—a common thread between what he was trying to express in the music and what I was doing with the visuals. That creatively worked out very well.

Will you create still images, like 2000's "Transit" series, again anytime soon?

I am actually producing a series of works that are holographic stills using the technique I used on this project which is called LiDAR; it's like a laser scanner. We took this LiDAR scanner into Central Park and went deeper and deeper into nature, scanning the park and essentially using it as a survey tool. This generates the most gorgeous, colorful images that are simply based on data. It's not a photographic technique. I'm using that technique to create some still images for an upcoming show.

In your opinion, what is the future of the moving image?

I think that in a weird way, as technology gets more sophisticated, people have become less aware of it. It's become part of our day to day life. We're seeing large-scale projection mapping, like on buildings. There's video everywhere. It's much less noticeable that we're actually looking at technology. It's opened up a lot of possibilities for artists working in that medium to create a sublime experience without people being distracted by the technology of it or the way they're saying it. It's more about the experience, and it becomes an experiential thing as opposed to a technological thing.