Saturday, November 12, 2011

Campbell's Dance of Light and Darkness: When Jim Campbell unveiled his first "Exploded View" piece at Hosfelt in 2010, I saw it as a breakthrough. A larger, outdoor version in Manhattan's Madison Square Park confirmed that call, as does "Exploded Views" (2011), a work commissioned by SFMOMA for its atrium.

Surrounded by high walls and ceiling newly painted black, Campbell's dangling array of thousands of LEDs "plays" a performance by Alonzo King's Lines Ballet. Flickering on and off, controlled by Campbell's custom electronics, the LEDs, like sparse, free-hanging pixels, soundlessly render the dancers' movements in three dimensions.

Campbell has updated the constellations. No longer do we have to project mythic figures on the night sky. He connects the dots for us, unearthing a poetics submerged in technology where no one had noticed it before.


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