

RYOJI IKEDA'S PARIS INVASION

Japanese artist Ryoji Ikeda has dominated the city with his unique take on minimalist gallery works and maximalist sound and light installations.

Text by [Francesca Gavin](#) | Published 17 November 2008



Ryoji Ikeda, spectra, Paris, Produced by Le Troisième Pôle / Eva Albarran & Co., co-produced by Forma, Commissioned as part of La Nuit Blanche 2008 for the City of Paris, Photo: Marc Damage

The French simply have a fascinating obsession with the East. There is a constant culture exchange between Paris and the far East. This autumn, Japanese artist [Ryoji Ikeda](#) has dominated the city with his unique take on minimalist gallery works and maximalist sound and light installations. He kicked off his city residency spectacularly at the Nuit Blanche last month – an annual all night art event that takes over the capital. 'spectra' consisted of 64 mega light bulbs (400 watts each) projected into the sky next to the Montparnasse Tower – Paris' most infamous tall building. Visitors walking amongst the lights were surrounded by a hypnotic sound piece, created by Ikeda himself, and beams that surpassed the skyscraper next door. The results were abstract, booming and intensely memorable. The 12 hour temporary installation dominated the city – like an alien call to the heavens.

'spectra' coincided with Ikeda's first major solo show in France V ≠ L at Le Laboratoire, a new contemporary art space. The exhibition shows a very different side to the artist-composer to the uber-light display. His gallery pieces are super clean examples of contemporary minimalism. Glowing white cube rooms and white slits in walls. The main piece is a duo sculpture, 'A Real Number / A Natural Number' which consists of incredibly long numbers written on low tables. Beneath the geekery is something idealistic and romantic – a search for the beautiful and sublime. "The purest beauty is the world of mathematics," the artist noted. Ikeda worked with mathematician Benedict Gross on the piece, which played with the beauty of numbers. Ikeda's forthcoming events – in the coming weeks at the Centre Pompidou and Grand Palais – also play with

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technology and maths as part of the structure of his artworks. data.tron at the Grand Palais, for example, is an audiovisual installation where every video pixel is calculated by a mathematical principle. "To me, beauty is crystal; rationality, precision, simplicity, elegance, delicacy. The sublime is infinity, infinitesimal, immensity, indescribable, ineffable." Ikeda has written.

It all sounds and looks very geeky – and it is. But in our world of technology, playing with pixels, ultrasonics and numbers does say something about a kind of beauty. There is something zen here – perhaps the beauty of the 22nd century.

V ≠ L at Le Laboratoire, Paris Until 12 January 2009

Ikeda will also be performing datamatics [ver.2.0] at Centre Pompidou, Paris November 21-22 and data.tron at the Grand Palais, Paris, 18-31 December 2008

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