



CADE TOMPKINS PROJECTS



## See this art installation transform a Times Square lobby into a garden party

By **Howard Halle**

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If there's one thing you could say about Times Square, it's that it's stimulating—maybe a little too stimulating. Everywhere, giant flagship stores lure shoppers with visual theatrics, while five-story high digital billboards bombard you with ads for everything from Broadway musicals to Asian news agencies (though why tourists would be interested in the latter is anyone's guess). But it has ever been thus: Almost from the beginning, Times Square has been dominated by noise, traffic—and especially by flashing, repeated messaging. Now, a new installation by artist and architect Aaron Pexa promises to provide a break from all that sensory overload.



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Taking up the lobby of 10 Times Square, Pexa's work is called *Garden Party* and combines floral wallpaper inspired by the building's Art Deco interior with neon and back-lit sculptures. But *Garden Party*'s main attraction is a mesmerizing, 20-minute video titled, *I Wander the Forest in Search of Mystery*. A surreal sequence that looks like it's been shot through gauze, *I Wander the Forest* features a crystal chandelier sparkling in the midday sun as it lazily twirls above a clearing by a lake. Every now and then, billowing clouds of colored smoke pass through the frame, obscuring the dreamlike mise-én-scene.



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Photograph: Zdravko Cota

Pexa describes his effort as an escape from the strobing, quick-cut editing of the signage environment outside, and indeed, the installation title and its 1920s-style touches evoke nothing so much as a romantic retreat to Gatsby's fictional Long Island Sound, where swanky society types gathered to drink on rolling verdant lawns. You, too, can join the party starting on Thursday through May 25.