



**VAN  
ALEN  
INSTITUTE**

**For Immediate Release**

October 28, 2015

Media Contacts:

Flatiron Partnership: Jeff Simmons, [jeff@anatgerstein.com](mailto:jeff@anatgerstein.com), 917-673-0024

Van Alen Institute: Mathilde Campergue, [mathilde@hellothirdeye.com](mailto:mathilde@hellothirdeye.com), 646-593-8713

Steven Thomson, [sthomson@vanalen.org](mailto:sthomson@vanalen.org), 212-924-7000 x 12

## Flatiron Partnership and Van Alen Institute Announce Winner of Flatiron Public Plaza Holiday Design Competition



### Winning Installation for 2015 Holiday Season to be Unveiled on Wednesday, November 18th

**NEW YORK, October 28, 2015** – The Flatiron/23<sup>rd</sup> Street Partnership Business Improvement District (BID) and Van Alen Institute today announced **SOFTlab** as the winner of the Flatiron Public Plaza Holiday Design Competition, the second annual competition of its kind, which called for proposals from New York design firms for a temporary installation at the heart of the Flatiron District. **SOFTlab**'s winning proposal, *Nova*, will be the centerpiece of the Partnership's annual holiday programming and a highly visible landmark in this thriving neighborhood of New York.

SOFTlab's installation opens to the public on Wednesday, November 18th—on the North Flatiron Public Plaza at Broadway, Fifth Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street—and will remain on view through the holidays as part of the Partnership's

annual “23 Days of Flatiron Cheer” programming. When complete, the crystalline *Nova* installation will compel passersby to enter the structure and gaze onto Flatiron’s iconic landmarks, framed by apertures in the installation’s exterior.

The closed call competition began in July 2015, when the Flatiron 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Partnership and Van Alen Institute—an organizer of design competitions for over 120 years—invited five design and architecture firms to submit proposals for this year’s installation. The invited firms were **Bureau V, Method Design, Sage and Coombe, SOFTlab, and Studio KCA**. A jury with expertise across the worlds of design and public art, including representatives from the Partnership as well as Van Alen Institute’s Board of Trustees reviewed the proposals.

“The annual holiday installation is now a tradition in the district that is enjoyed by visitors and locals alike. It provides a festive and magical experience on the Public Plaza during the holiday season, said **Flatiron Partnership Executive Director Jennifer Brown**. “We are particularly proud that this year’s installation is a true local effort – not only in our partnership with Van Alen Institute, but also in the selection of a neighborhood design firm, SOFTlab,”

“This project is a fantastic opportunity to engage with a local site and designer,” said **David van der Leer, Executive Director of Van Alen Institute**. “SOFTlab’s *Nova* offers a playful and unusual perspective of the landmarks and street life surrounding the plaza that will be a visually stimulating and interactive outdoor experience for the holiday season.”

In *Nova*, the placement of scopes, or viewing cones, is arranged to represent a centralized proverbial North Star for the Flatiron District, with each scope pointing to a distinct landmark. In effect, *Nova* acts as an observatory for the “constellation” of iconic sites in the neighborhood: the Flatiron Building, Met Life Tower clock tower, Empire State Building, and surrounding landmarks.



“Using a mix of optical materials, our design creates a human scale kaleidoscope, remixing the surrounding iconic buildings with color, light, and the reflections of pedestrians,” said **Michael Szivos, Founder and Principal at SOFTlab**. “Although our design reads as an iconic and festive figure from above, the experience at the pedestrian level is very different. The exterior gives way to a crystal-like, mirror-surfaced interior that looks different from all sides.”

“Design is always about creating magical experiences, and we’re excited to see 3M materials inspire SOFTlab to connect imagination with space and community for this year’s winning Flatiron installation,” said **Eric Quint, Chief Design Officer at 3M**. “Collaborative creativity is what sparks ongoing new possibilities in our world of design; the *Nova* project demonstrates this, transforming 3M optical materials for safety and light management into a new context of art and architecture in the heart of the Flatiron District.”

Sponsored by the Flatiron/23<sup>rd</sup> Street Partnership, *Nova* and the accompanying programming “23 Days of Flatiron Cheer” is also made possible with generous support from Presenting Sponsors Tiffany & Co. and Meringoff Properties, Contributing Sponsors Grey Group and Macmillan.

## Invited Proposals

### Bureau V: *Tuleva*



*Tuleva* represents a piece of a fictional humanoid toy from an imaginary, previously-unknown, technologically-advanced society. Visitors enter the installation to access information on its fantasy history and how it represents the past of the Flatiron District as the city’s former “Toy District,” and the area’s future as a growing hub of NYC’s high-tech community. Led by three partners, Stella Lee, Laura Trevino, and Peter Zuspan, Brooklyn-based studio Bureau V designs architecture, objects, clothing, performances, installations, and events.

### Method Design: *Land/Mark*



*Land/Mark* addresses the relationship between iconic landmarks and ecological life by constructing an installation within the shadow of the Flatiron Building onto the plaza, creating a feedback loop between what Method Design identifies as three elements of landmark-making: place-making, achieved through a single meandering curb with sloping planes; space-making, demarcated by synthetic reeds that diffuse light and offer moments of privacy; and social amplifications, manifested in the proposal’s public furniture. The piece as a whole becomes its own micro-urban system that taps into and creates new context, memory, and inhabitation in the city. Method Design is led by Reese J. Campbell and Demetrios A. Comodromos.

### Sage & Coombe: *Snowclone*



*Snowclone* is a rumination on the death of anticipatory calls to a relic of 20th-century urban infrastructure: the public telephone booth. To reignite the excitement of talking on the phone, modified phone booths align across the plaza, allowing strangers to speak to one another. The history of the telephone combined with the shape of the Flatiron District creates actual connections with individuals one would often pass unnoticed.

### StudioKCA: *Golden Ribbon*



Golden Ribbon by StudioKCA is an installation with a cause. The structure resembles a giant holiday ribbon made of lit golden boxes. In a partnership with a hunger relief organization, a box will be lit every time 25 meals are donated with hopes of 500 meals donated per day. Over seven weeks, the Golden Ribbon will become brighter, illuminating the holiday season of the Flatiron District.

To download high resolution images from all proposals, [click here](#).

Last year's winning team, led by Brooklyn-based design firm **INABA**, created *New York Light*, an intricate structure of mirrored panels and LED lights that created an interactive nighttime lighting display and partial reflections of the plaza's surroundings.

### Competition Jury Members

**Nicholas Athanail**, The Corcoran Group and Flatiron Partnership board member; **Michael Bierut**, Partner, Pentagram; **Wendy Feuer**, New York City Department of Transportation Urban Design & Art; **Jessica Healy**, USA Pavilion Expo Milano 2015 and Van Alen board member; **John Loercher**, Digifabshop; **Jane Kojima**, Deputy Director, Flatiron Partnership; **Aleksey Lukyanov**, Partner, Situ Studio; and **David van der Leer**, Executive Director, Van Alen Institute.

### About the Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership

The Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership Business Improvement District, formed in 2006, is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to enhance the area's reputation as one of New York's most vital and exciting neighborhoods. This is accomplished by maintaining a clean and safe environment for the district's businesses, residents and visitors; by spearheading area improvement projects; and by marketing the diverse business and retail options in this vibrant and historic neighborhood.

www.FlatironDistrict.NYC  
FlatironDistrict.NYC/facebook  
@FlatironNY

### **About Van Alen Institute**

At Van Alen Institute, we believe design can transform cities, landscapes, and regions to improve people's lives. We collaborate with communities, scholars, policymakers, and professionals on local and global initiatives that rigorously investigate the most pressing social, cultural, and ecological challenges of tomorrow. Building on more than a century of experience, we develop cross-disciplinary research, provocative public programs, and inventive design competitions.

www.vanalen.org  
facebook.com/vanaleninstitute  
@van\_alen

### **About SOFTlab**

SOFTlab is a design studio based in New York City. The studio has designed and produced projects across almost every medium, from digitally fabricated large-scale sculpture to interactive design to immersive digital video installations. As a studio, SOFTlab embraces projects through a mix of research, ideas, and craft. On one hand the studio is invested in projects that require significant research and experimentation. These projects provide a testing ground for us to help germinate a studio environment that is ripe with creativity.

In 2012 SOFTlab was awarded the Architectural League Prize for Young Architects & Designers, and previously in 2010 the studio was selected for the New Practices New York award by the AIA Chapter of New York along with 7 other young studios. The studio has produced a wide range of design projects and collaborated with various artists, designers, publications and institutions including MoMA, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Hall of Science, Eyebeam, New Museum, 3M, Vice Media, Intel, The New York Times, Surface Magazine, EPFL, Pratt Institute, and Columbia University. The studio has exhibited work in galleries throughout New York City. The studio continues to work on many projects in New York while taking on new projects and clients in Europe and Asia.

**www.softlabnyc.com**