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### **For Immediate Release**

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



### **Installation Anchors Flatiron Partnership’s “23 Days of Flatiron Cheer” Festivities**

**NEW YORK, November 20, 2015** – On Wednesday, November 18th, the Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership Business Improvement District (BID) and Van Alen Institute unveiled SOFTlab’s *Nova*, the winner of the Flatiron Public Plaza Holiday Design Competition that serves as the centerpiece of the Partnership’s annual holiday programming and a highly visible landmark in this thriving neighborhood of New York. The second annual competition of its kind, the initiative called for proposals from New York design firms for a temporary installation for the holidays at the heart of the Flatiron District.

The crystalline *Nova* installation compels passersby to enter the structure and gaze onto Flatiron’s iconic landmarks, framed by apertures in the installation’s exterior. 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: the Flatiron Building, Met Life Tower clock tower, Empire State Building, and surrounding landmarks. LEDs within *Nova* react to sound and create a pulsating light effect when activated.

“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.”

SOFTlab’s installation opened 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. The installation is permitted through NYC DOT Art.

*Nova* was selected from a closed call competition held by the Flatiron/23<sup>rd</sup> Street Partnership and Van Alen Institute, an organizer of design competitions for over 120 years. Five design and architecture firms were invited 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 reviewed the proposals, including representatives from the BID’s Board of Directors, as well as Van Alen Institute’s Board of Trustees.

“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 is a visually stimulating and interactive outdoor experience for the holiday season.”



“DOT Art is excited to be partnering with the Flatiron/23<sup>rd</sup> Street Partnership for this second holiday season. The installation illustrates how interactive public art can change the perception of an environment thereby allowing people to experience it in a new way. We count on organizations like the Partnership to commission these exciting installations making NYC streets ever more inviting,” said **DOT Assistant Commissioner of Design + Art + Wayfinding Wendy Feuer**.

“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 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.

To download high resolution images of *Nova*, [click here](#).

### **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.

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### **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.

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### **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

### **About NYCDOT ART**

Launched in October 2008, the New York City Department of Transportation's Art Program invigorates the City's streetscapes with engaging temporary art installations. The Program partners with community-based organizations and artists to present murals, sculptures, projections and performances on plazas, fences, barriers, bridges and sidewalks for up to 11 months. Projects are presented within four program tracks: Arterventions, Barrier Beautification, Community Commissions and Art Display Case. For more information, visit [www.nyc.gov/dotart](http://www.nyc.gov/dotart).