



Ron Baselice/Staff Photographer

Contemporary artist Jim Campbell examines an initial run of his artwork titled, "Exploded View (Dallas Cowboys) 2013" at Cowboys Stadium in Arlington Friday April 12, 2013. 2880 LED's flicker, and with the help of computer software, transfer great plays captured on film onto the lights. The piece is the 50th piece of art on display at the stadium. (Ron Baselice/ The Dallas Morning News) 04132013xMETRO

## Premium Article LED artist has created the 50th piece in the Cowboys Stadium collection

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In the Age of Busy, Jim Campbell appears to be busier than most. He recently appeared at Cowboys Stadium, where he installed the 50th piece of art in the venue's versatile collection. Then he flew to China, drawing even further inspiration for an art career that has, to say the least, taken an unconventional path.

In his mid-50s, Campbell is a San Francisco-based artist who works primarily with LED installations. He began in film but switched to electronic sculpture during the 1990s and eventually to LEDs. Unlike most of his art-world contemporaries, he focused on electrical engineering and mathematics, earning two degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Campbell defines the past decade of his work by saying, "I have been creating low-resolution images that explore the edges of vision perception. When do our eyes — brain — stop seeing and start imagining? I'm interested in the borderline between abstraction and representation, where intuition and primal perception take over."

Primal perception: It's an intriguing choice of words, given that this is a football stadium. Campbell calls the stadium's art collection wonderful and says that, in his case, it came about when art consultant Mary Zlot "saw a work that I had done at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and thought a work in the same vein could work well in the stadium." Zlot ended up appropriating the work for the stadium collection.

Campbell says it consists of about 3,000 "little lights each individually hung to create a three-dimensional field of lights that, from the right viewing point, coalesces into an image of football players running around. From close up, the image is completely abstract, and from far away, the image is recognizable."

In a remarkably short time, Campbell has established a serious pedigree. He has exhibited throughout the world, in such institutions as the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in Sydney.

His electronic artwork is included in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., and the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco.

On top of all that, Campbell holds almost 20 patents in the field of video image processing. Now he's a fixture at Cowboys Stadium, which has hosted a Super Bowl, the NBA All-Star Game and several supersize concerts.

Campbell, the math-inspired artist, seems to fit right in, with his art making a telling comment on football itself.

In recent years, critics have seized the mojo in Campbell's work. The *Boston Globe* published its take on Campbell's *Exploded View (Commuters)*, which a reviewer noted "utilizes more than 1,100 LEDs, spherical white bulbs the size of sourballs, suspended at various heights on wire from a steel frame, creating a rectangular, three-dimensional, polka-dotted field of light. Campbell has programmed the lights to shine or dim; in concert, they depict the shadowy figures of hurrying people.

"It's magical," the critic says. "When I first saw the piece from several feet away in the darkened gallery, I took it to be a monitor on the far wall with a grainy video. Up close, it's like a swarm of fireflies."

The critic concludes by saying "the works are streamlined and smart, but it's the flip-flop Campbell incites between the most mundane representation and startling abstraction that makes them art."