

## Nation's tallest public art to top Salesforce Tower

By **Sam Whiting** Updated 6:56 pm, Thursday, May 4, 2017



IMAGE 2 OF 20

[Buy Photo](#)

Artist Jim Campbell updates San Francisco's planners on the details of his lighting sculpture, which will be at the top of the Sales force Tower.

A brilliantly dynamic nine-story electronic sculpture will top the new Salesforce Tower with ever-changing LED light in what is being touted as the tallest public art installation in the United States, according to plans unveiled Thursday before the San Francisco City Planning Commission.

The piece by San Francisco artist Jim Campbell will comprise four separate but integrated lighting patterns that will be at the top of the 61-story building, which is scheduled to open in July.

The main element is a low-resolution moving image on all sides of the building. Within the image is a montage of the cityscape to be captured each day by six cameras posted

around the city. These will include people on the streets, the surf and the sky, Campbell told the commission.

“It will be a diary of the day that you will only see at night,” he said, adding that the low-resolution lighting will be subtle and best viewed from a distance. “You can’t get close to it. You only see it from far away. That’s rare for an artwork.”



At 1,070 feet, Salesforce Tower, at the corner of First and Mission streets, will be the second tallest building in California and 12th tallest in

### RELATED STORIES



**Last beam completes Salesforce Tower, SF’s tallest building**



**Milestone for Salesforce Tower: Now the tallest in the West**

the country. Designed by Pelli Clarke Pelli, the building narrows to a crown at the top. The top nine floors will be unoccupied, and will contain the light installation, rising 150 feet. The top six stories will feature the imagery, and the lower three will form a foundation of colored light. The installation will comprise 11,000 lights in any number of colors and combinations.

“The end result will be a slow, meditative moving image display that connects to the city in a direct way,” he said. This is the signature style of Campbell, an MIT-trained electrical engineer who designed chips for tech firms before becoming a full-time artist nine years ago.

In his Dogpatch studio, called White Light, Campbell, 61, has been working on the project for three years. The budget is around \$4 million.

The casing for the lights will be perforated aluminum, which will add texture. The lights will be on the outside of the sheeting and face inward toward the building so that the viewer will see the LED colors bounce off the aluminum.

“This process of reflecting the light off of the surface, as I have done in previous studio work, creates a soft and continuous image instead of a harsh direct image like a Times Square video screen,” Campbell wrote in his artistic statement.

## LATEST BUSINESS VIDEOS

There will be a small companion piece on the plaza level that will be on during both day and night.

The project was commissioned by Boston Properties, developer of the tower. It falls under the city’s “1 percent for art” program, in which a developer of a major downtown project must either commission an artwork valued at the equivalent of 1 percent of the cost of the project, or make a cash contribution to the Public Art Trust administered by the San Francisco Arts Commission.

In addition to the still-untitled artwork at the crown of Salesforce Tower, Campbell has designed a sister work for Mission Square, the public plaza attached to the project. Unlike the installation at the crown, this installation will be visible during the day.

Thursday’s presentation before the commission was a courtesy. City approval is not required, and the first lights were being installed at the time of the meeting.

“This is a great work and a very critical piece for San Francisco,” said planning commissioner Rodney Fong.

*Sam Whiting is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. Email: [swhiting@sfchronicle.com](mailto:swhiting@sfchronicle.com) Instagram: @sfchronicle\_art*

## **Light art**

Artist Jim Campbell introduces his Grace Cathedral installation at:  
<http://bit.ly/ladderoflights>

© 2017 Hearst Communications, Inc.

**H E A R S T**