

# Street display spins electromagnetic dots, bares clues (w/ Video)

July 20 2012, by Nancy Owano

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(Phys.org) -- TNT's promotion of a crime-solving show *Perception* is turning out to be a Manhattan pedestrian show-stopper with its electromagnetic-dot display. The recently introduced sidewalk display raises eyebrows on what technology can bring to the effort of messaging large audiences. Call it sign technology of the future planted in the here and now. A giant screen made up of 40,000 physical dots fast-spinning

from black to white has been rolled out and on to the streets of Manhattan at Herald Square at 885 Sixth Avenue and 32nd Street.

The 23x12 foot [display](#)'s 44,000 spinning dots have a unique interactive mission with pedestrians. The dots react and the screen reflects back a unique image of anyone walking by the screen. Also, if you move your hand, arm, or any other body part, you hear the movement back, like a roomful of poker chips shuffling down.

The TNT-promoting clicker is that through people's body movements, whether they are darting back and forth or waving their arms or doing a more complex move--can literally erase words from the screen - baring instead clues, mysterious sounding word statements, such as "She can't sense time."



The technology concept builds on the audible clackety flip-boards on the walls of train-stations, which the technology team behind the sign, Brooklyn-based Breakfast, raised to another level.

They built the wall display at the Breakfast site and got the dots to run 15 times faster than originally designed to create the word clue-finding experience for people in the city. “Transporting the screen over here was like moving a 500-pound butterfly..and very sensitive. It was nerve-wracking,” commented one Breakfast staffer.

The sign has caused no small sensation, as users get to see a unique black-and-white reflection of their movements, and to listen to what their movement sounds like, and to witness the words being pushed back as they move, with the thousands of dots spinning rapidly back and forth.

TNT is a television channel that approached Breakfast, a creative agency that considers itself as “custom tailors of the tech world.” The Breakfast team specializes in custom physical digital installations.

The reactive super-speed electromagnetic dot display was something that Breakfast knew could relate, at least in theory, to a New York pedestrian culture that represents a challenge. “New York sidewalks are like a highway,” said Breakfast creative director, Andrew Zolty. “Nobody stops.” The creative act of message passing had to be one that could happen fast.

Speaking about the thousands of tiny little dots that flip from black to white, he said the team wired a them to run very fast— increasing the rate at which the dots can flip between a black and white display element—such that there would be no delay as pedestrians got to use their bodies to bare the hidden clue words.

The impact of the street display screen may not just result in crowd

interest in the TV drama series but in favorable publicity for Breakfast. Its web site indicates the team is ambitious about being in on projects that make everyday objects smart. “The reason you didn’t sit at the kitchen table this morning and get the weather from your cereal box is simply because the cereal company didn’t even know to ask,” says the Breakfast site.

The display will continue to run 24 hours a day until July 29.

**More information:** [breakfastny.com/2012/06/reakti...net-dot-display-per/](http://breakfastny.com/2012/06/reakti...net-dot-display-per/)

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