

In January of 2007 the city of Boston was partially paralyzed by a bomb scare wherein a number of found electronic devices were seen as potential explosives. The devices featured a number of small flashing lights depicting a cartoon alien performing a crude gesture. Intended to advertise the upcoming season of a popular animated television show, this misadventure in guerilla marketing was perceived as a potential hazard to the population, or, even worse, a terrorist act. The Bomb Squad was called out to destroy the devices, and the city's major traffic paths came to a standstill for most of an afternoon. My first thought upon hearing about the Boston scare was that our fears had gotten the best of us. My next thought was that I needed to address this in my work as an electronic installation artist.

The Declarative Lamp Project, created in collaboration with artist Rebecca Stern, uses electronic performance to explore the extent to which fear has been instilled in American culture. Witnesses in a park experience seemingly innocuous electronic pathway lighting that comes alive at dusk with lights and voices in many languages declaring, "I am not a bomb."

Because these devices exist in a natural environment and use human voices, I wished to add natural and personal elements to the Lamps' execution. As a child I remember being fascinated by the mathematical equation to calculate air temperature from the frequency of cricket chirps. If one monitors a single chirping cricket for 15 seconds, the number of chirps plus 39 is the current air temperature (in Fahrenheit). In our piece, this equation has been reversed to allow the evening's temperature to establish the rhythm of the declarative voices. In cold temperatures, the lamps speak less often than in warm.

To give an innocuous overtone, we chose a number of Arts & Crafts style solar powered garden lights as the framework within which to build our project. Ordinarily these lamps store energy during daylight hours and engage an energy efficient LED light at dusk. Ms. Stern and I have repurposed these lamps to flicker as if they hold lightening bugs in correlation with the recorded messages. This process begins at dusk, producing a chorus of voices whose rhythm is directly

related to the temperature of the evening air. The lamps each repeat the phrase “I am not a bomb” in one of twelve languages. After a twenty-minute performance, the lamps power down to await the next sunset.