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<https://index.hu/kultur/2022/10/26/light-art-museum-fenymuveszeti-muzeum-hold-utca-budapest-feny/amp>

## The world's first light art museum to have opened in Budapest



FELÍCIA KORCSMÁROS

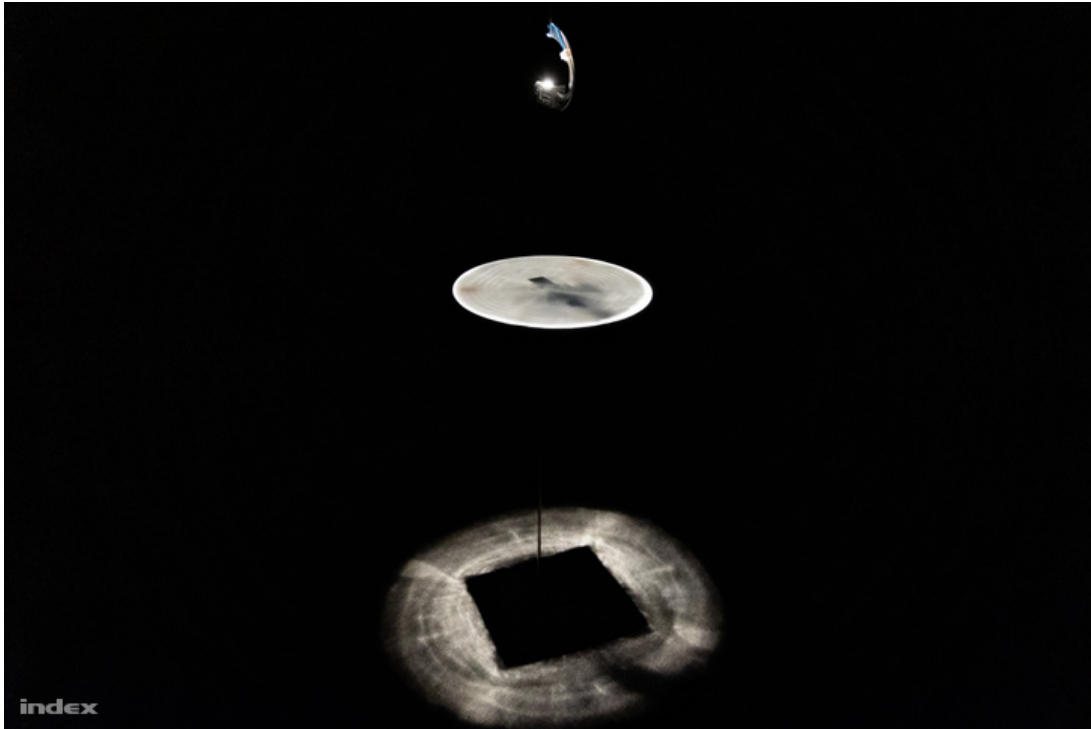
**An Instagram-compatible museum has opened in Budapest, luring visitors with the promise of stunning photographs, but they will actually take away genuine values from here, not merely the afterthought of glam. The Light Art Museum Budapest is the first exhibition venue in the world that has fully committed itself to the collecting, research and display of artworks exploring light.**

In summer, weeks before the official opening, news of a unique place had taken the social media by storm. I mainly came across photos and videos taken by tourists and international students in Hungary, who posted their encounters with an exciting world of light. My first thought was that Budapest might have added another place like its Selfie Museum and the **Museum of Illusions**, which draw in people with the hype of FB-Like-magnet photos and videos.

### **I COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE WRONG.**

While it is true that the special installations lend themselves to truly unusual and thus attention-worthy and beautiful photographs thanks to the Light Art Museum (LAM).

The Light Art Museum Budapest is the first exhibition venue in the world that has fully committed itself to the collecting, research and display of artworks exploring light. This means that the building of the former Central Market Hall, better known as the Hold Street Market, now accommodates the world's first light art museum in its own right.



Gallery: The light art museum recently opened in Budapest is one of the coolest places in Hungary  
Photo: Péter Papajcsik / Index

The museum's art director, Szabolcs Vida, was our guiding light, showing us around the exhibition space. He told us that each of the four project initiators – László L. Laki, György Klinkó, Zsolt Kassai and László Zsolt Bordos – had been thinking of a way to exhibit the art of light for years, when a fortunate meeting allowed them to merge their concepts.

Szabolcs Vida offered his help at the kick-off of the project to build the exhibition space, and is now also in charge of any future development and the launch of museum functions that they deem important and socially beneficial.

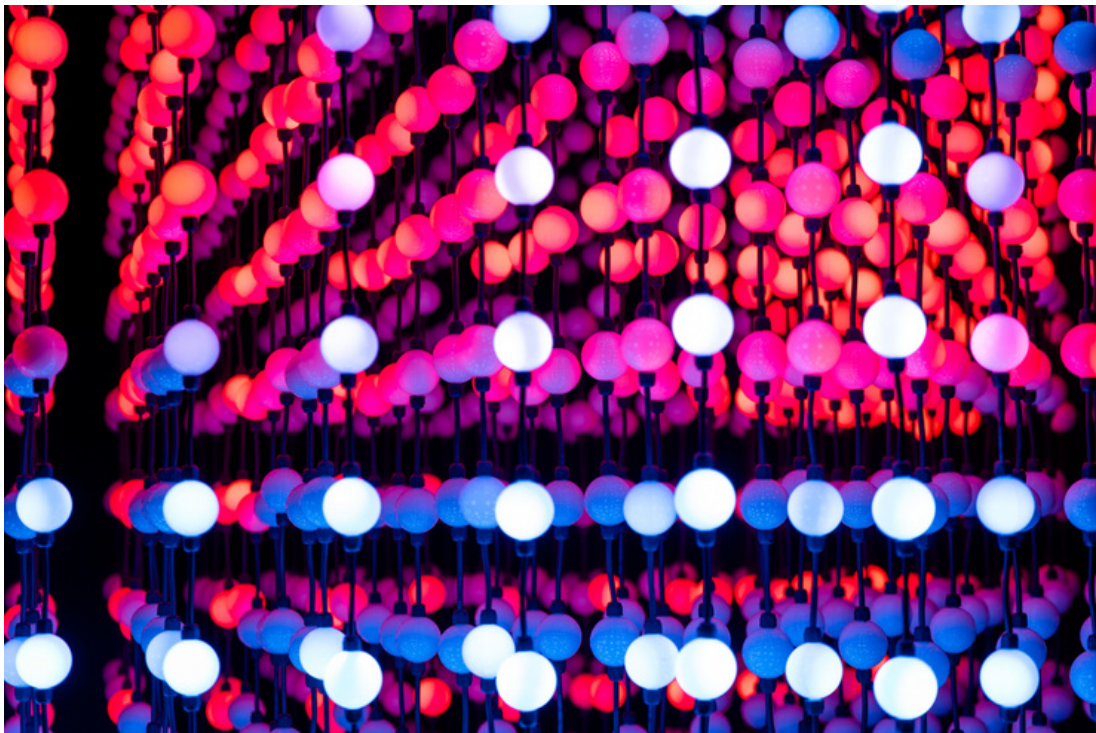
## Moonlight

When creating the museum, the team endeavoured to preserve the characteristics of the historical building, designed by Győző Czigler, so that visitors could enjoy not only the displayed artworks but also the original architecture. It is noteworthy that the market hall is in an area with listed buildings, posing no little challenge to implementing the interiors, with the initial difficulty being that **THE EXHIBITION OF LIGHT REQUIRES REAL DARKNESS.**

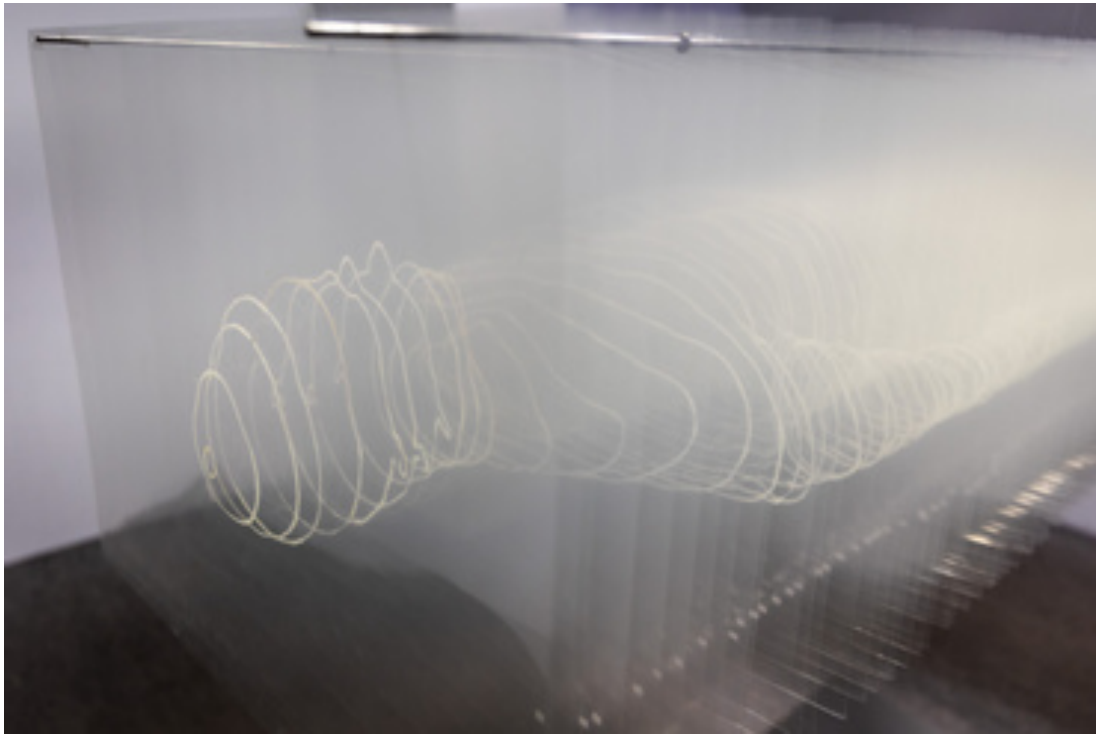
Entering the museum, it takes some time for our eyes to adapt to the light conditions inside, while the ongoing sound effects create an unmatched atmosphere. This is why it is not surprising that at first visitors will find themselves aimlessly wandering.

By the time we reach the gallery, our minds start focusing on the space in which we are walking and it really adds excitement to the experience that hidden between the otherwise pleasantly illuminated cast-iron pillars we can explore what a few years ago had been stands selling the ingredients for our Sunday lunch. Overcome by child-like enthusiasm, Szabolcs Vida explained to us that the market hall, which was built during the industrial age, rhymes with the current museum in two ways: electricity allowed the spread of artificial light back in the days when the market was built, and the hall functioned as a communal space, just like a museum.

The light art exhibition had four curators: Márton Orosz, the director of the Vasarely Museum; László L. Laki, one of LAM's founding owners; László Zsolt Bordos, a light artist; and Viola Lukács, curator and cultural coordinator. The exhibition spans the Hungarian light art scene from László Moholy-Nagy to living contemporary artists. Every effort was made by the museum to present the medium of light in such a way that every visitor could take something home from here, by making it inspiring and relatable for everybody, while showing the depth of the explored theme. Various types of artworks are seemingly 'scattered' in the interior, starting with those that arouse strong emotions purely by their visual effect and ending with conceptual art.







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Photo: Péter Papajcsik / Index

The installations embrace a wide spectrum, and the fact that everything we see is by Hungarian artists adds further excitement to the museum visit.

## 10 thousand cubic metres – can it stay?

Without doubt, one of the most spectacular features of the exhibition is the 40-metre-long balloon installed in the middle of the hall. It was sewn from 2,000 square metres of textile to be a projection surface. Currently, it provides the space alternately for a work each by two artists, creating extremely different experiences.

Displayed in this special space, *Searchlight*, an animation by Ivó Kovács, and *Space Eater*, a light installation by Viktor Vicsek, make us feel as if we had stepped inside a kaleidoscope. Although a similar effect is created by virtually all of the exhibits, it is here where we can feel the biggest dose of the unique interplay of lights and darkness, with this immeasurably thrilling and yet soothing ambiance calming our nerves roughed up by the urban cacophony.

In the meantime, light kinetics mesmerises even the most savvy visitors, turning them into children again. Light re-draws the edges of the world known to us, recontextualising forms we thought we had grown tired of, while the immersive artworks modulate space as if we were in Space, or in a fairy-tale, or perhaps in a fairy-tale about Space.

*It is vital that we can re-discover lost light artworks, or those that would have been important from an art historical perspective but remained abandoned plans, as their reconstruction will help us better understand the path along which this medium had travelled up until the most recent works, noted Szabolcs Vida.*

To realise this ambition, LAM, in conjunction with the Kepes Institute, undertook the task of reconstructing *Glowing Columns* (1973) by György Kepes. Although it had some faulty glass tubes and the system that was designed to control the intensity of the glow of the red light, as envisioned by Kepes, was also defunct, they were repaired and revamped.

A Moholy paraphrase is exhibited on the gallery, completely rebuilt, from scratch, by Dávid Szauder based on the original design and documentation. The installation is actually bigger than the original. Those who never heard can find out that according to *László Moholy-Nagy, an outstanding artists of this trend and the father of the media aesthetics dubbed »new vision« luminokinetics shows the known world from a new perspective and that he called the creative use of light a helpful means to find our way in the complexities of modern life.*

During our visit there were a great deal of young people in the exhibition, and we observed a regular pattern: after they made sense of what they saw, they pulled out their phones.



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Photo: Péter Papajcsik / Index

So, if you first encounter the museum in an Instagram or TikTok post, you could say that its interiors are dominated by external appearance. However, there are profound layers of thought behind the spectacular installations, which plays no little role in the exhibition's international renown.

*It is a constant subject of discussion with us – but generally in the art scene too – how, with what means we could bring art closer to the young generation. We are personally happy that they come here and communicate in their own language when sharing their experiences here,* said the art director, who believes that this place is liked by the target audience, so they are planning to hold museum and art education workshops here for school children.

Some of the displayed artworks are less spectacular than the balloon, yet they draw the eye like a magnet. One of them is Attila Csörgő's installation, which lends a circular object a rectangular shadow. In the work by Borsos Lőrinc (János Borsos and Lilla Lőrinc) laser beams directed at the words *I AM* generate the word *YOU* on the opposite end of the hall. The laser beams are made visible because the installation is inside a smoke-filled glazed space. It is a unique installation as this solution could not be implemented in other museums.





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*One of the advantages of light art is that it can create effects that expand human perception, teaching us to see, and better understand the nature of the space that surrounds us.*

Now, in the midst of an energy crisis, one might ask if it is a good idea to open a museum that operated based on electricity. Szabolcs Vida was ready to answer this question too: *We fundamentally endeavour to exhibit works and use technology that represent a responsible approach to energy use.*

Besides building its own collection, LAM is planning several new exhibitions in the future, allowing them to use recurring elements.

The current exhibition displays works by László Moholy-Nagy, as well as Victor Vasarely, György Kepes, Bálint Bolygó, Ben Fodor, Gáspár Battha, Lőrinc Borsos, Éva Bortnyik, Csaba Tubák, Attila Csáji, Attila Csörgő, Zsolt Gyenes, Healium, Erzsébeth Horváth, Kiegészítő Izzók (Glowing Bulbs), Dávid Ariel Szauder, Jeannette Szirmay, Gábor Kitzinger, Nicolas Schöffer, András Mengyán, Erik Mátrai, András Nagy, Adorján Zalán, Róbert Terkál, Ákos Zemba, Csongor G. Szigeti, Zalán Szakács, Csilla Szilágyi, Tamás Herczeg, Éva Köves, Andrea Sztojanovits and Waldemar Matthis-Teutsch.

*(Cover photo: Péter Papajcsik / Index)*