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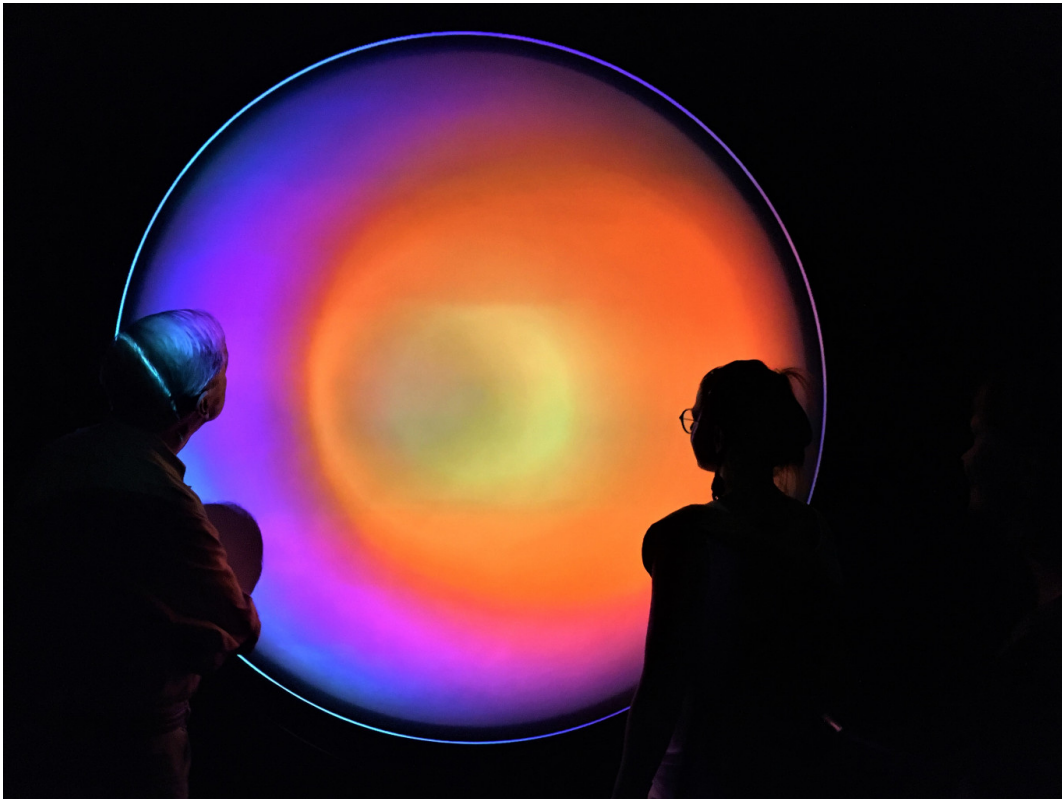
A light orgy in Hold Street: exhibition to open today in the Budapest light art museum nothing short of a spellbinding spectacle

Tamás Vajna

From Thursday onwards laymen can also experience that the spread of electromagnetic radiation known as light is far more than the phenomenon discussed in physics class. The scientific results of the study of light are at best mentioned in the footnotes of art history literature written on the effect an artwork has on the viewer. So it is fair to say that there would be no fine arts without the discipline of optics.

This is just one of the things at the focus of the exhibition running from 14 September at the [Light Art Museum](#). Opened a year and a half ago in Hold Street Budapest in the historic building of the former market hall, the institution is operated exclusively with public funds. Its second exhibition, *Superluminal*, introduces visitors to virtually all aspects of the nature of light through works by the world's leading artists.

The light artworks selected and arranged by co-curators [Barnabás Bencsik](#) and Borbála Szalai explore everything from photosynthesis to the multiverse of endless series of black holes that would barely exist without light. This includes human vision, i.e. the receptor-level perception of light – which, due to its dual nature, behaves in various ways – and the interpretation of photon patterns.



Andrea Sztojánovits's light installation *Oasis* at the Light Art Museum Budapest's exhibition running from 14 September 2023. Photo: Qubit

Luminous life

“Besides the dual nature of light (particle and wave), the thematic horizon of the displayed works extends to the invisible ranges of the electromagnetic spectrum: radioactive radiation, analogue and digital image and sound radiation, cosmic frequencies, and very low frequencies, which can also be discovered in nature. The hierarchy between scientific, speculative and metaphysical approaches ceases here, giving space to contradictions, paradoxes, transitions between endpoints and critical approaches examining man's relationship with nature, ranging from photosynthesis through synthetic sunshine and the environmental effects of light pollution to sunshine exploited and turned into a commodity,” says the curator's introduction. Plant life germinating out of nothing takes centre stage in two displayed artworks: [Zünc Studio](#), a London-based group of artists, pays homage to (sun)light, which makes photosynthesis possible, with a fractal animation, while DISNOVATION does the same with an installation evoking a sowing seed breeding laboratory, in which the exact value of the ecosystem services rendered by the exhibited vegetation is converted into forints and euros.



Zünc Studio's light installation *PHOTOSYSTEM II* at the Light Art Museum Budapest's exhibition running from 14 September 2023. Photo: Qubit



DISNOVATION's *Life Support System* at the Light Art Museum Budapest's exhibition. Photo: Qubit



The infochart of DISNOVATION's installation. Photo: Qubit

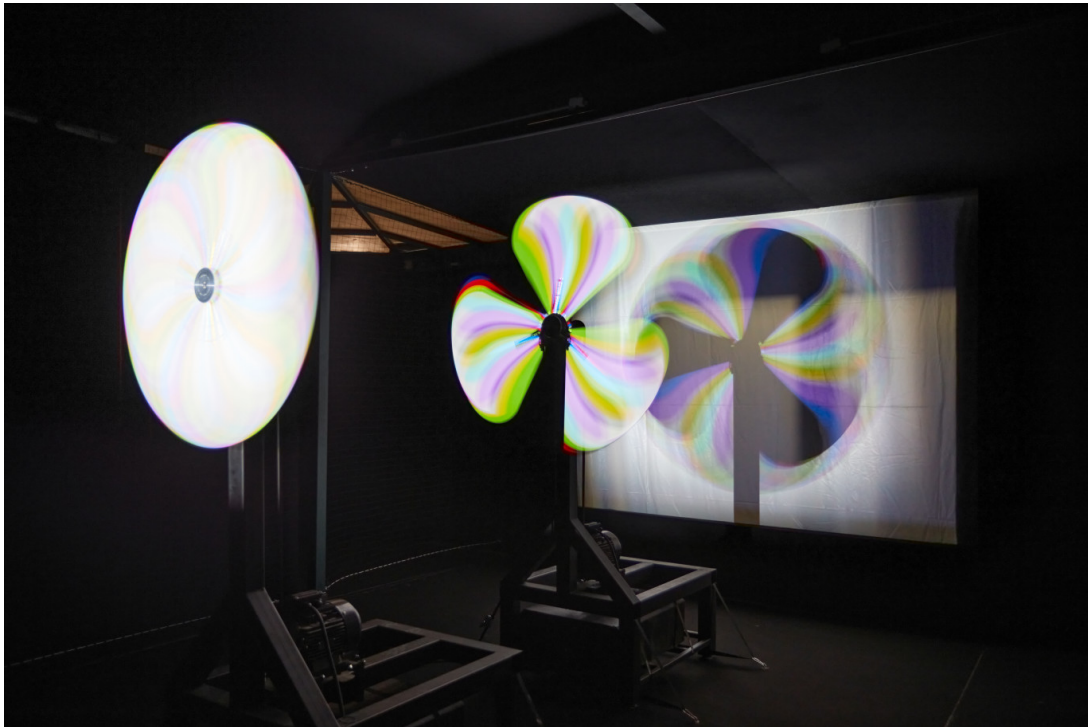
The scientific truth behind light's magical power is confirmed by virtually all of the installations: at Wednesday's soft opening members of the press gathered around the artworks, made available for close inspection, like moths around a lamp. Interactivity is slowly becoming a must in contemporary art, and what makes Ahmet Said Kaplan's installation exciting is that visitors can play with light using their hands.



Ahmet Said Kaplan's interactive installation *Lumin* at the Light Art Museum Budapest's exhibition of autumn 2023. Photo: Qubit

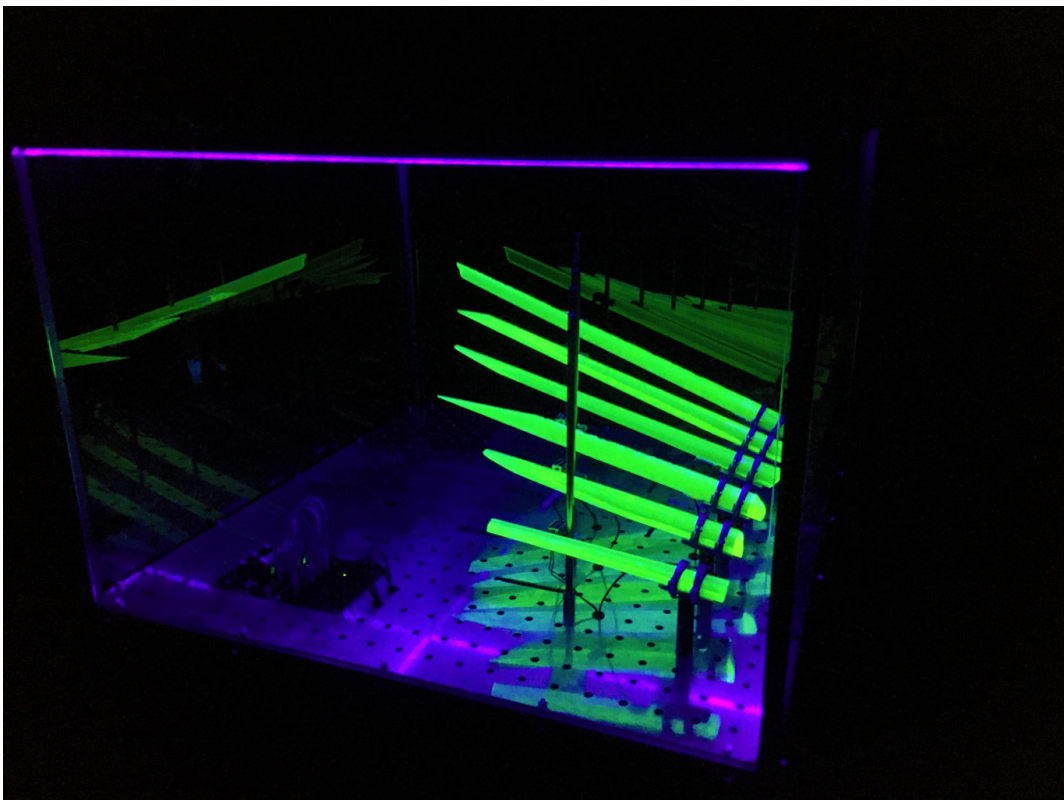
Machine lights

Following the recommended route, visitors will be captivated by less poetic works, such as the opening piece of the exhibition: the turbine engine-driven aircraft rotors by Hague-based artist [Philip Vermeulen](#). The essence of the installation is that light, slashed into its colours by the propeller-like blades, can be guided from one interference to the next by altering the speed of rotation, thus creating an extremely hypnotic visual spectacle.



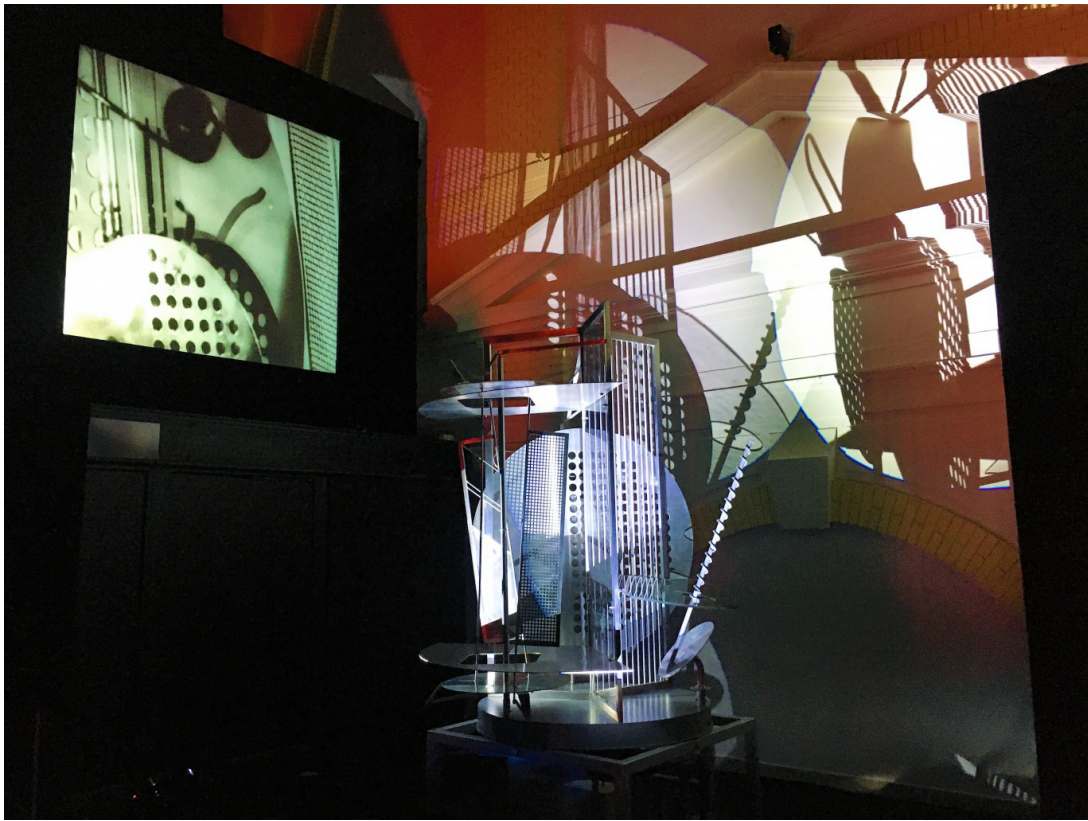
Philip Vermeulen: *Whether, whether* (2020). Photo: Dávid Bíró

A less pleasant exhibit is URANOTOPIA by Bence Barta and János Borsos, collectively called SÁRGANY, which examines the fatal property of electromagnetic radiation in the light refraction of uranium glass shards.



URANOTOPIA at the Light Art Museum's new exhibition. Photo: Qubit

We also discovered how topical [László Moholy-Nagy](#)'s works still are. This is what the curators must have concluded because they re-exhibited the master's *Lightplay* (1932), i.e. its reconstructed version, from the first exhibition.



Replica reconstruction of László Moholy-Nagy's *Lightplay* (1932) at the Light Art Museum Budapest's exhibition of autumn 2023. Photo: Qubit

[Attila Csörgő](#) is one of the few Hungarian contemporary artists who, similarly to Moholy-Nagy, is well known beyond the borders. Using classical telescope optics, his fine-tuned *Clock-work* (2017) is a rather successful attempt to tame light.



Attila Csörgő's installation *Clock-work* at the Light Art Museum's new exhibition running from 14 September
Photo: Qubit

Sticking to the analogue world, *White Noise* (2007) by the Lithuanian-born and New York-based [Zilvinas Kempinas](#) is fascinating through its simplicity. His monumental analogue screen, woven from ten kilometres of magnetic tape unspooled from VHS cassettes and kept in motion by fans, is truly captivating.



Kempinas' *White Noise* from a distance... Photo: Qubit



... and from close up at the Light Art Museum Budapest's exhibition running from 14 September. Photo: Qubit

Hawking and the real Led Zeppelin

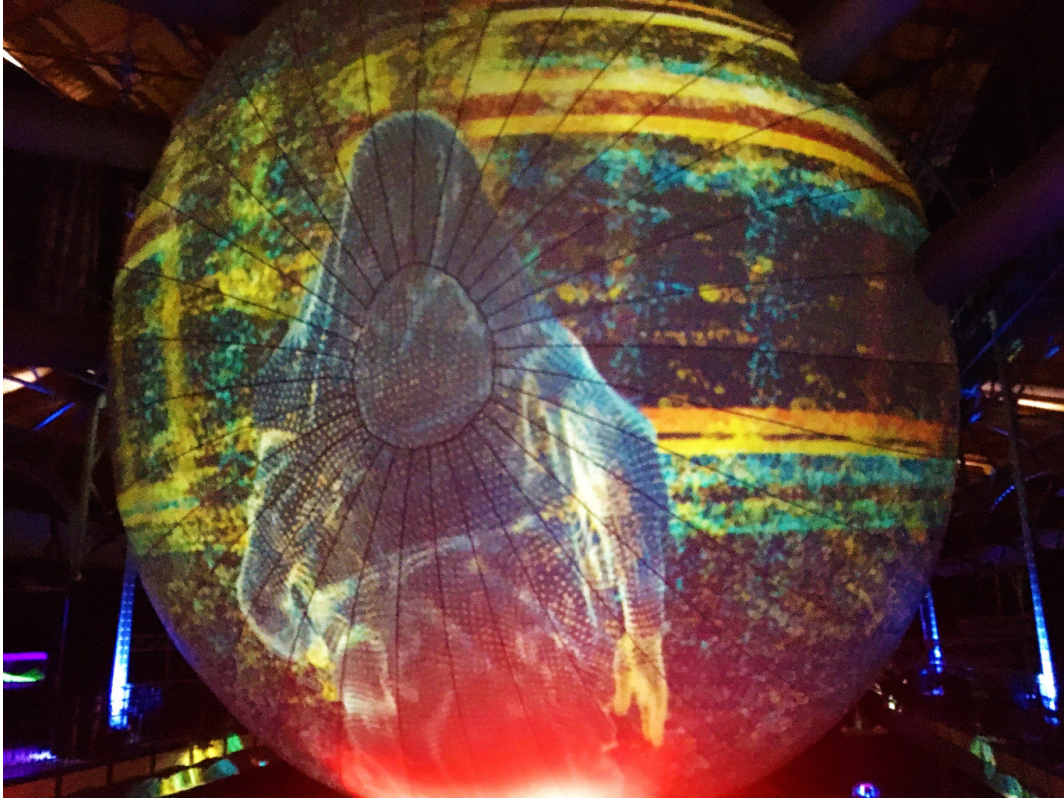
[As a kind of testament](#), before his death in spring 2018 Stephen Hawking succinctly explained his theory of the end of the world and the existence of parallel universes.

This multiverse theory was visualised by the Italian creative team [fuse*](#). It is said that they designed the image-generating algorithm in their project by incorporating Hawking's mathematics. This means that the image-generating programme never creates two identical images projected onto the walls because, following the rules of the multiverse, the pixels are randomly organised into black holes and autonomous universes.

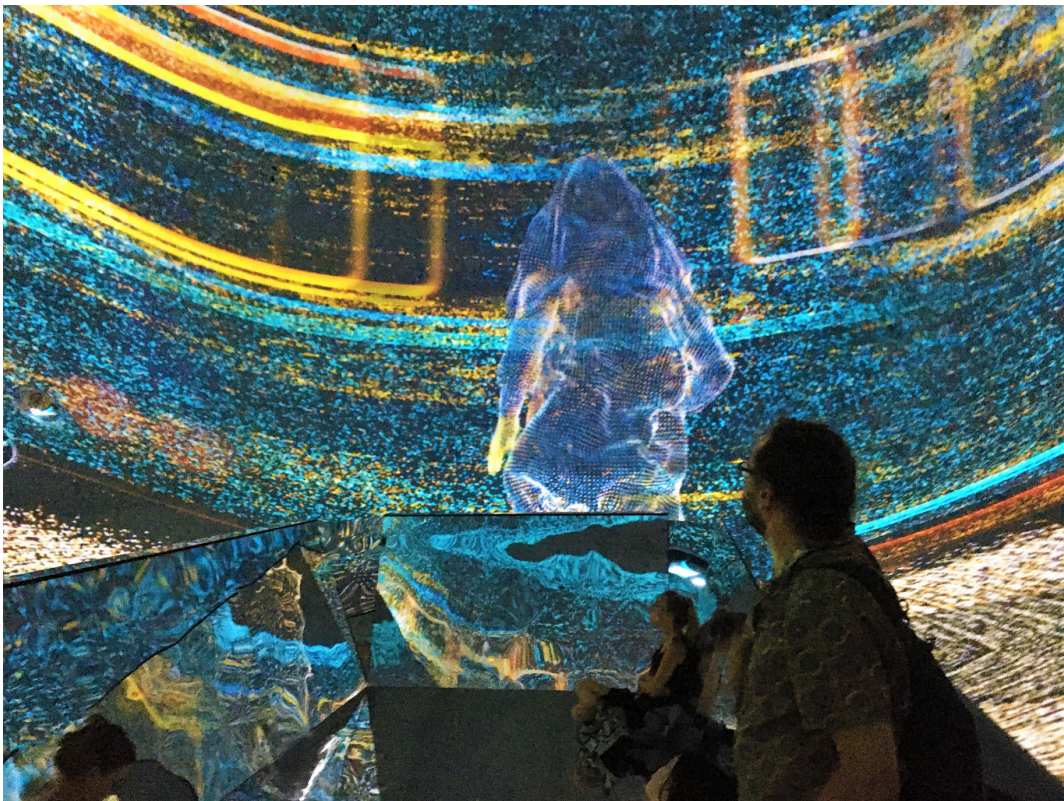


The light installation *Multiverse Unfolded* by [fuse*](#). Photo: Qubit

Journey, created by a group of Turkish artists called [Nohlab](#), celebrated on the light art scene as a world star, invites us on a galactic journey with their gigantic work, optimised for a zeppelin built by the staff of the Hold Street museum and virtually filling the complete interior of the former market hall. The installation is a Zeppelin-shaped hyperbaric tent with a twelve-channel immersive video being projected onto its wall at 360 degrees. The effect is enhanced by the mirror-tiled deck, which makes the visual experience even more hypnotic.



Nohlab's cigar-shaped zepplin from the outside... Photo: Qubit



...and on the inside. Photo: Qubit

(Superluminal, Light Art Museum, open from 14 September 2023 to 20 May 2024, Hold Street, District V, Budapest)