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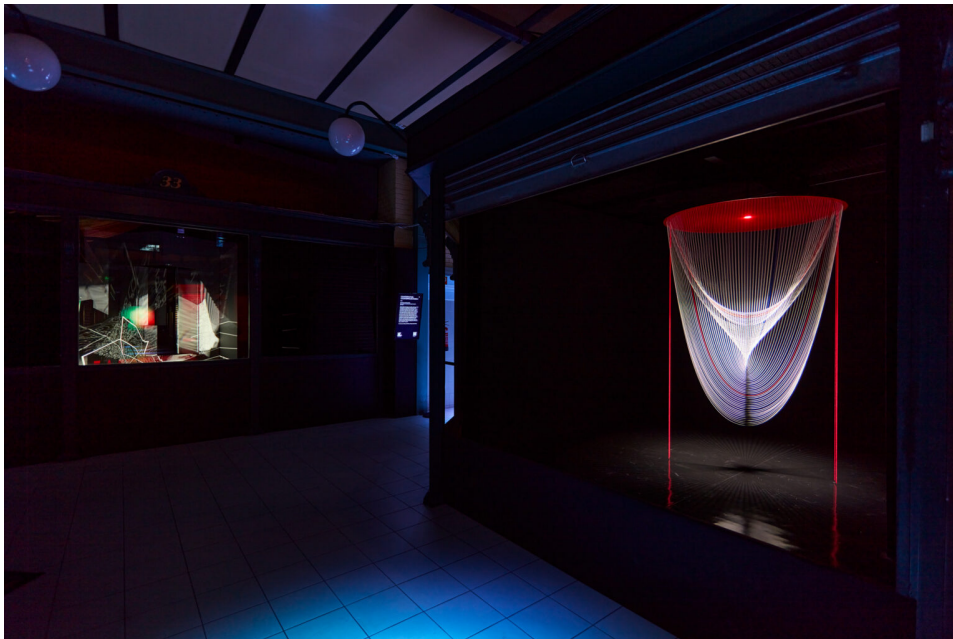
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<https://artportal.hu/magazin/superluminal-versenyben-a-fennyel-a-light-art-museum-uj-kiallitasa/>

## Superluminal – Racing with light. New exhibition at the Light Art Museum

*The second exhibition of Budapest's new museum, now showcasing an international selection, is both hypnotic and deeply thought-provoking.*

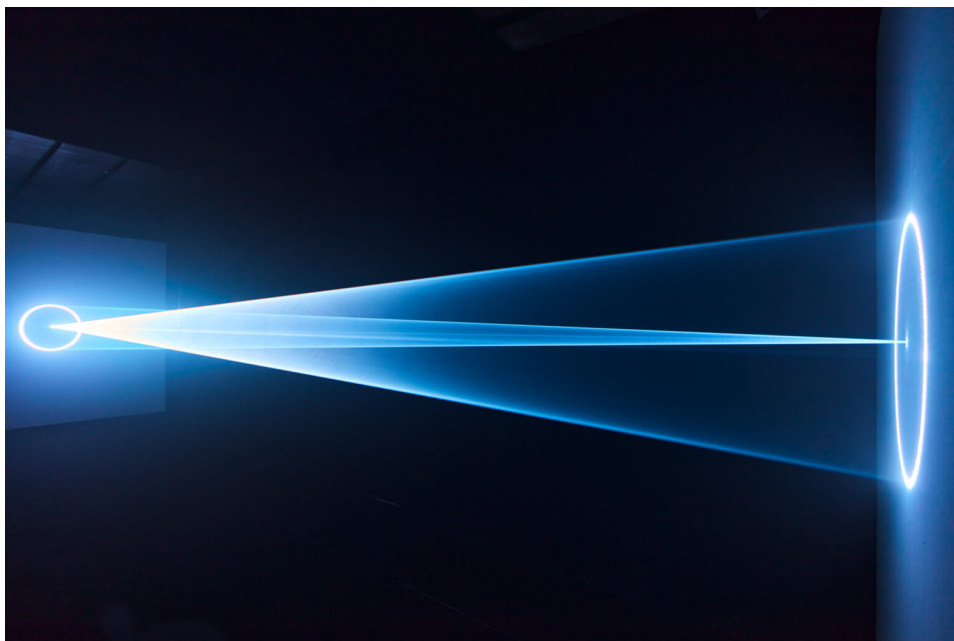
One of Budapest's youngest museums, the Light Art Museum Budapest (LAM), opened its doors last summer with its show *Light Revolution*. The institution is an exciting addition to the museum scene of the capital, and that of Hungary in general, in several ways: it specifically deals with light art, a branch of the visual arts with rapidly rising popularity but given a museum of its own in only very few places worldwide. Operated in the private sector, LAM has made its home in the listed building of a former market hall in Hold Street, preserving its original architecture and atmosphere.



Exhibition interior with two installations: Áron Kútvölgyi-Szabó's *Counterfactual Counterprojections* and Žilvinas Kempinas's *Nautilus*  
Photo: Dávid Bíró /Light Art Museum Budapest

Szabolcs Vida, the museum's art director, said that the museum's main goal is to bring contemporary art closer to the wider public. Light art is an excellent testing ground for this as through the integration of science, technology and art it speaks 'the language of today' and makes it suitable for exploring relevant themes, while inviting visitors to engage in an exciting dialogue. Moreover, since the younger generation can speak this language well, the institution can draw many of them in despite their reservation about the world of 'classical' museums. Expectations have been borne

out by experience since LAM's first exhibition, which ran until mid-August last year, attracted 200 thousand visitors. While the institution's first goal concerns audiences, the second one focuses on artists: they seek to create an 'ecosystem' in which the artists can fully devote themselves to their creative pursuits. In practice this translates into lending them help in production and paying them well enough to be able to realise new projects under favourable conditions. Reflecting this principle, a tender to the tune of four million forints was announced specifically to promote young artists and one million forints was provided to support the work of FKSE (Studio of Young Artists' Association). The first key objective set by the museum is to help young people who want to explore the fine arts in more depth. To this effect, believing that its infrastructure and extensive knowledge can contribute to the work carried out in higher education, LAM organises museum education workshops and strives to develop relations with these educational institutions.

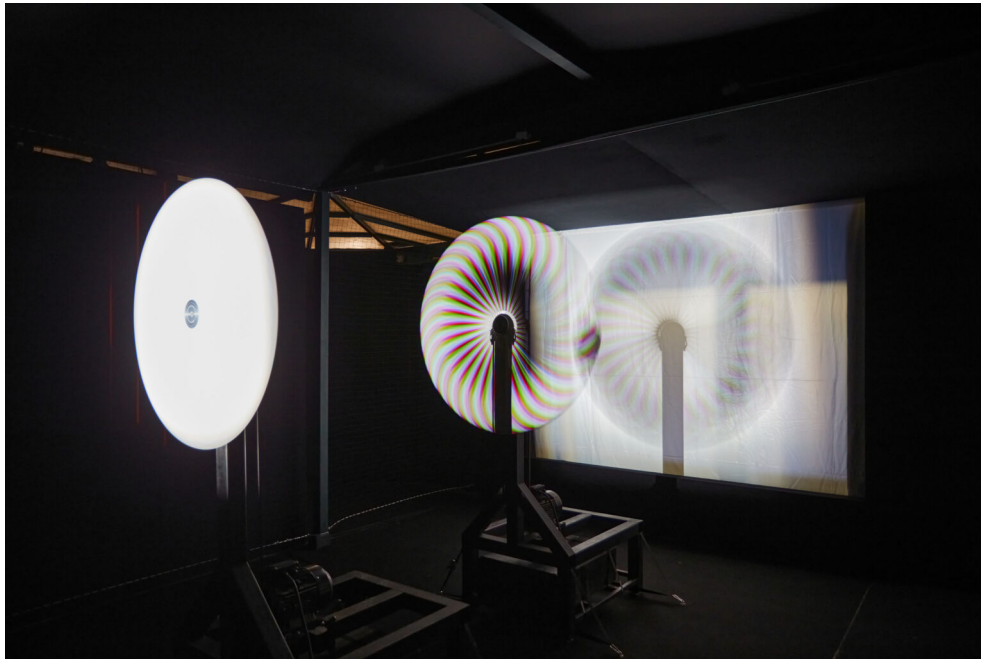


Kit Webster: *SUPERNOVA*, 2023, laser projection  
Photo: Dávid Bíró/Light Art Museum Budapest

Fired up by the success of its debut show, *Light Revolution*, the museum has undertaken an even greater challenge. At its new exhibition, open from 14 September, it presents the most inspiring representatives and spectacular projects of this highly popular contemporary art trend through a selection including works from the international light art scene, by its international élite so to say. The new show, *Superluminal*, demonstrates perhaps even more clearly where LAM positions itself: on the borderline between 'high art' and the creative industry, the visual entertainment industry and visual design. The latter area, as put by Barnabás Bencsik, one of the curators of the new exhibition, has a great deal of creative energy that closely resembles the approach infusing the fine arts.

Let us stop for a second to look at the exhibition's title. A good title should clearly convey the underlying content and arouse curiosity. *Superluminal* meets both these criteria, although it does the latter by having an ear-grabbing ring to it but one that is unknown to potential visitors, or at least for the majority. The term superluminal means 'faster than light, having a faster speed than light'. But does or could

something like this exist?



Philip Vermeulen: *Whether Weather*, 2020, installation  
Photo: Dávid Bíró/Light Art Museum Budapest

One of the fundamental natural constants is the speed of light through a vacuum, which can be measured precisely, without any uncertainty, and can be regarded as an absolute value. This physical constant is lent special significance (besides it being the speed of gravitational and electromagnetic waves) by the fact that, according to the theory of relativity, it is the absolute limit of speeds possible in nature: the speed of two physical objects relative to each other can never exceed the speed of light. Several physicists have tried to circumvent this absolute limitation by making theoretical propositions spanning from wormholes to the controlled 'crumpling' of space-time, one of which – who knows – might actually make superluminal (faster than light) travel possible one day.

Another question instantly arises: since the speed of human perception is by far slower than the speed of light, would it change our view of the world, and if so, in what way, if human perception were possible in structures faster than the speed of light in a vacuum; in other words, how would we see the world from a superluminal position? The exhibition makes an attempt to present artistic approaches that are open to shifting away from exclusively human-centric interpretations accepting only one truth and move towards directions that can re-contextualise the physical phenomenon of light itself, among others.



Attila Csörgő: *Clock-work*, 2017, kinetic installation  
Photo: Dávid Bíró/Light Art Museum Budapest

The above clearly shows that the exhibition moves along several borderlines: not only that between high art and the visual entertainment industry, already mentioned before, but also that between art and science. (The extent of which will be later discussed in the detailed description of one of the displayed installations.) Besides the dual nature of light (particles and waves), 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 so-called very low frequencies, which can also be discovered in nature. The hierarchy between scientific, speculative and metaphysical approaches is dismantled here, giving room 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.

The extraordinarily spectacular exhibition is curated by Barnabás Bencsik and Borbála Szalai, with Dalma Kovács being its assistant curator. They are all highly experienced experts on the new, progressive genres of contemporary fine arts, but, due to crossing so many boundaries, this project posed a serious challenge even to



them. In the end, they selected forty projects – light, sound, video and kinetic installations, as well as laser projections and digital video animations – for the exhibition.

Light is obviously at the heart of all these works, which at the same time go beyond light's generally used definition in physics as electromagnetic radiation perceptible by the human eye. Exploring various themes from supernovas to black holes, from artificial nature to parallel universes, from programmed neural networks to radiating glass objects and from the Northern Light enclosed in crystalline structures to the choreography of light on the retina, the works seek new perspectives within and beyond the realms of visibility.



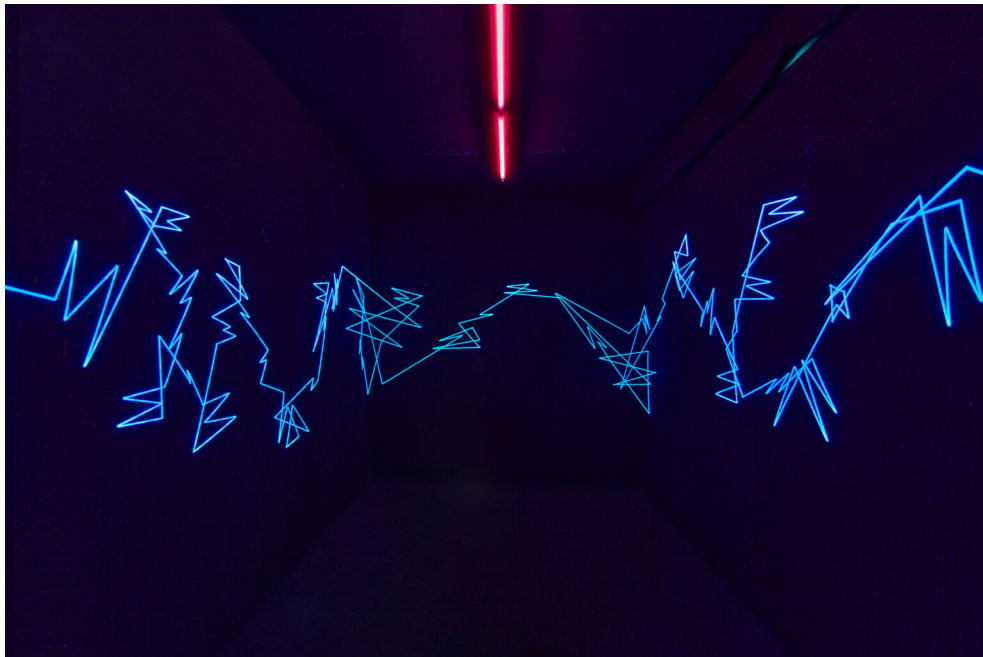
fuse\*: *Multiverse.unfolded*, 2018, real-time audiovisual installation  
Photo: Dávid Bíró/Light Art Museum Budapest

*Superluminal* deserves special praise for creating a historical context for the exhibited projects – made by the most significant domestic and international representatives of contemporary light art in recent years or specifically for this show – by displaying them together with their art historical predecessors and original or authentically reconstructed works by the foremost artists of Hungarian origin, such as László Moholy-Nagy, György Kepes, Victor Vasarely, Nicolas Schöffer and Vera Molnar.

In the exhibition spaces, turned into total black holes in the interior of the former market hall, visitors can see works by some of the internationally most acclaimed studios creating immersive projections: the Zünc Studio from London, the Nohlab from New York, as well as fuse\* and the NONE Collective from Italy. The permanent exhibitor of the world's most prominent museums, the Lithuanian-born and New York-based Žilvinas Kempinas, participates with several spectacular installations, and debuting in Budapest is a brutally powerful kinetic projection by Philip Vermeulen, the most successful young talent of the Dutch artscience scene. From among the regular invitees to international contemporary museums and exhibition venues, *Superluminal* features István Csákány and Attila Csörgő, two Hungarian

artists living abroad, Goran Petercol from Croatia, the Russian-born Vadim Fishkin and a young French artist, Justine Emard, among others.

Some of the displayed projects, such as those by Mikyta Svätopluk, are by artists who had previously participated in Hungarian exhibitions with entirely different works. The exhibition material also includes compelling projects by domestic artists from different generations, from Gyula Várnai to Áron Kútvolgyi-Szabó, and from Andrea Sztojánovits to Dávid Ariel Szauder.



Vera Molnar: *OTTWW (Ode to the Western Wind)*, 1981-2010, UV-sensitive thread, nails, variable dimensions. Installation reconstructed by Péter Szalay.  
Photo: David Bíró/Light Art Museum Budapest

*Superluminal* is typically an exhibition that can be appreciated at two levels. All of the works are extraordinarily spectacular, with many of them even creating a virtually hypnotic effect, engulfing the visitors. They are all accompanied by excellent and thorough descriptions, and spending time on reading them is definitely worthwhile. You can find out, for example, that the complex and continuous line drawn by UV-sensitive thread in Vera Molnar's conceptual work was made by an enigmatic algorithm into which the artist translated the poem *Ode to the West Wind* by the famous nineteenth-century poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. You can also discover what otherworldly sounds and lights emanate from Loránd Szécsényi-Nagy's light and sound installation *Cosmic Frequencies*, which examines cosmic interactions that are not directly detectable through human perception. Let it be revealed: the installation is based on signals that were collected by a probe orbiting the Sun and then transformed into sounds. The waves detected from the accessible sounds are reproduced by a programme and transmitted to the installation. The thus-generated vibrations are made visible both on the surface of the work and in the reflections cast on the wall thanks to the light illuminating it. The data collected by the probe transform into sound and the sonic waves into visible waves, supplemented by a constantly changing soundtrack controlled by a generative programme. If you cannot

understand all this at first reading, do not lose heart: once you see – and hear – the installation, the pieces of the puzzle will come together.

*Superluminal* is open until 20 May 2024.

**Cover image:** NOHLAB: *Journey*, 2019

Photo: Bíró Dávid/Light Art Museum Budapest