

AI-generated dreams and fluorescent LSD molecules on Hold Street

[Tamás Vajna](#)

It has been known for a quarter of a century that a network of neuroactivity called the neuromatrix is capable of creating visual sensations in the brain without light perceived by the eyes, i.e. without retinal sensory stimuli. The phenomena discussed in Anglo-Saxon literature under the term phantom vision includes everything from hallucinations to dreams with one of its most everyday forms being the dazzling geometric shapes we “see” after rubbing our shut eyes.

The latest exhibition of the [Light Art Museum Budapest](#) (LAM), funded and run exclusively on a private basis, is titled [Phantom Vision – Undercurrents of Perception](#) and examines this phenomenon of neurophysiology. The works on display from early September until next spring in the LAM – the institution which operates in the building of Budapest’s former historic marketplace on Hold Street and [has put Hungary on the world map of contemporary art](#) – address phantom vision from numerous perspectives, ranging from the dual nature of light through sound, radio and electromagnetic waves to brain waves.

All this is realised in the spirit of total [immersion](#), allowing time and space for visitors to have the sensation of falling completely under the spell of the contemporary light art works and, leaving their own everyday reality behind, to be transported into another reality. This was all conveyed to Qubit by Borbála Szalai, the curator of LAM, and by Szabolcs Vida, the head of the programme, who added that the top-of-the-range exhibits on the boundary between science and art are intended by their makers to guide visitors into the deepest layers of the human psyche.



The interior of LAM's exhibition *Phantom Vision – Undercurrents of Perception* on Hold Street
Photo: Dávid Bíró / Light Art Museum Budapest

AI dreams and gamer nightmares

The exhibition with 38 contemporary light art works reveals one of the hitherto little-known facets of AI applications, which have been put to 'less intelligent' uses too. The Italian group of artists, called fuse*, created a film with an astounding visual universe using an anonymised selection from a database of 28,000 dreams recorded in writing by dream researchers around the world. During the projection of the animation made by an AI-based image-generator (exclusively in black and white to accord to the norm for people's dreams), visitors can listen to stories of the dreamers in AI-generated voices, with Hungarian subtitles, while being able to read the same thing in texts projected onto the wall.

For those with (even) stronger nerves, we recommended the installation titled *Dream Journal*, which shows the impact permanent online existence can exert upon the human psyche. The looped animation is the work of Canadian artist Jon Rafman: it is the brutal dream diary full of terrifying but mostly depressing scenes of a game addict who spent three years on the dark web.

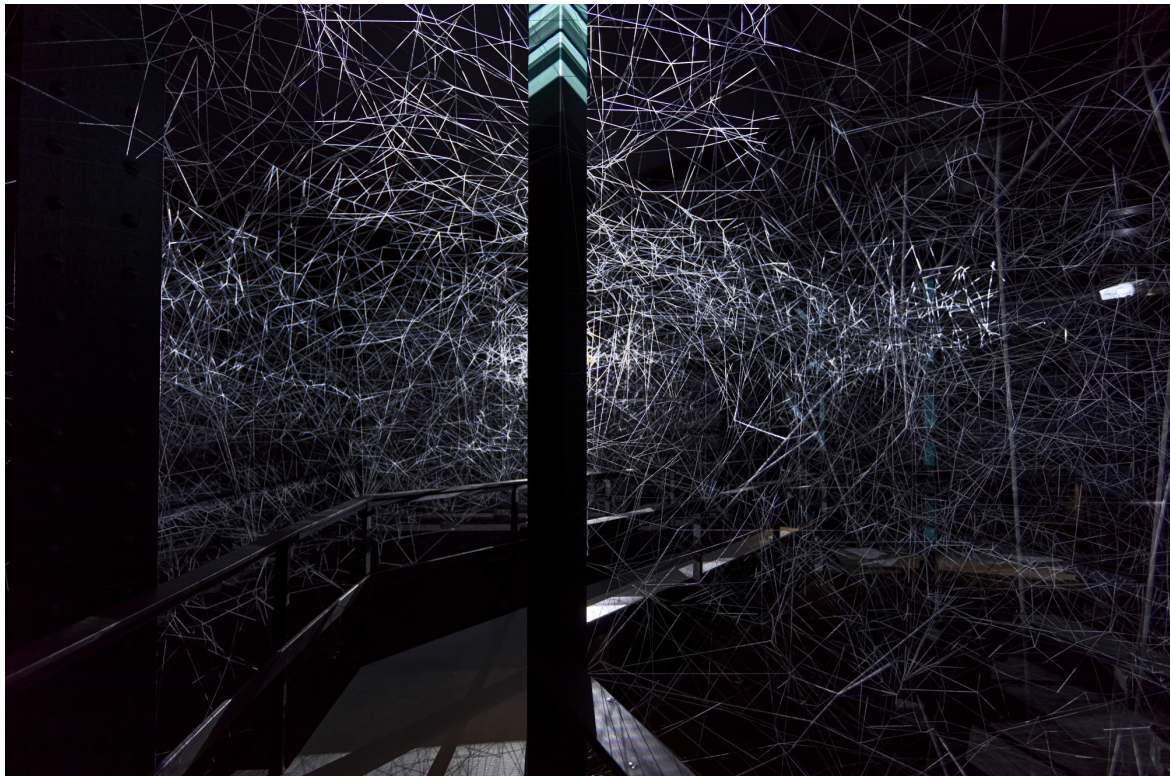


Jon Rafman's *Dream Journal* in LAM's exhibition *Phantom Vision –Undercurrents of Perception* on Hold Street

Photo: Dávid Bíró / Light Art Museum Budapest

Neurons and visible sound waves

Yasuhiro Chida's *Analemma*, which the artist made on-site in the museum on Hold Street, maps the neural network of the human brain. The dense web made up of thin polyester threads interweaving a space of almost 100-square metres is illuminated by four simple projectors flashing hundreds of thousands of light strands, illustrating the constant neurological changes taking place from moment to moment in the peritoneum set on our necks.



Yasuhiro Chida's neural network in LAM's exhibition *Phantom Vision – Undercurrents of Perception* on Hold Street

Photo: Dávid Bíró / Light Art Museum Budapest

The installation by Finnbogi Pétursson, an Icelandic, is even more minimalist. His work *Infra-Supra* brings to life the waves generated by three loudspeakers in the three-hertz range, inaudible to the human ear, using a thin layer of water and two projectors, 'entrusting' the eyes to pick up the stimuli instead of the ears.



Finnbogi Petursson's visualisation of three-hertz sound waves in LAM's exhibition *Phantom Vision – Undercurrents of Perception* on Hold Street

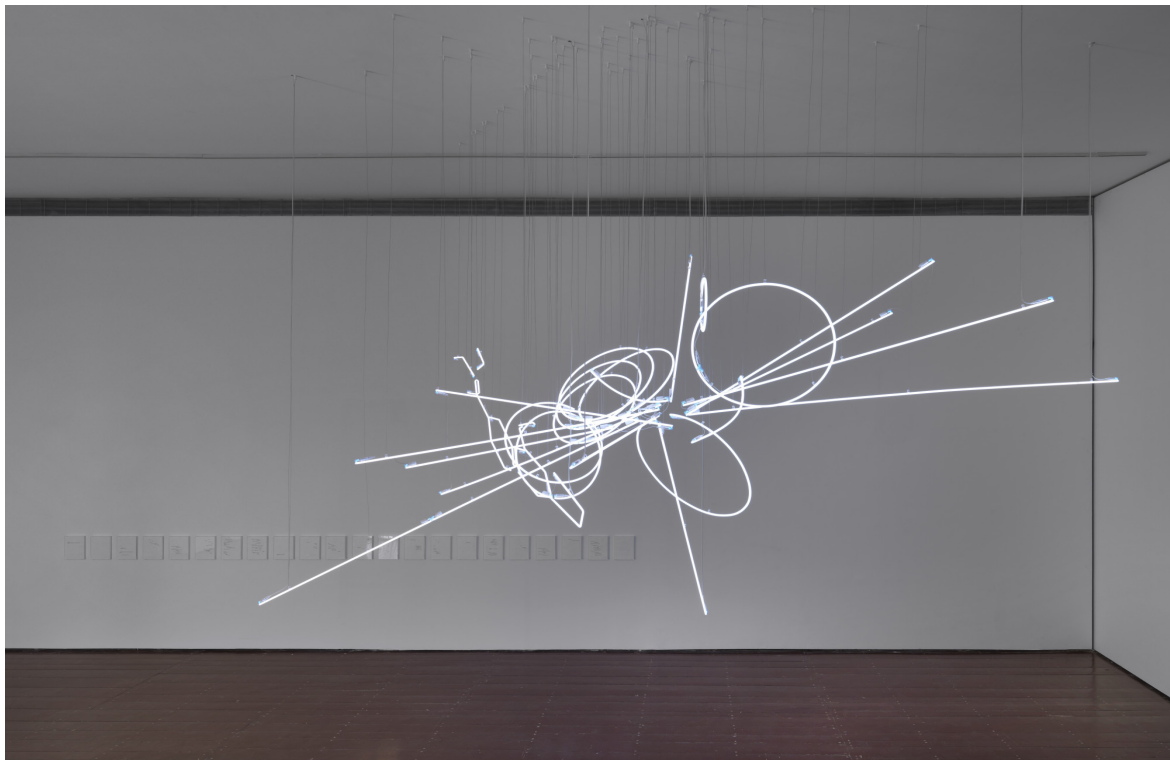
Photo: Dávid Bíró / Light Art Museum Budapest

Neon trip

Synthesised in the late 1930s by Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann from a cereal parasite fungus called ergot, a molecule called lysergic acid diethylamide, or LSD, is known to create a more colourful and vibrant 'inner movie' in the human brain than anything else. In the best-case scenario, it even makes visible the Higgs boson divine particle, something difficult for the layman to imagine.

It is no coincidence that the exhibition exploring the phenomenon of phantom vision also includes one of the most striking works by Cerith Wyn Evans, a British artist of contemporary light art: his fluorescent installation *A Community Predicated on the Basic Fact Nothing Really Matters* is the visual representation of the 'matrimony' of an enlarged spatial model of an LSD molecule and a Higgs boson.

The image below, however, does not show the work exhibited in the Light Art Museum in Budapest – which is a far more spectacular interior than what is shown here – because Cerith Wyn Evans is such a global star in his genre that only press photos of his works he approves can be published.



Cerith Wyn Evans: *A Community Predicated on the Basic Fact Nothing Really Matters*, 2013
Photo: Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary