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Humanity Is Not the Centre of the World: The Light Art Museum's New Exhibition Reveals Other Perspectives, from the Molecular Level to Interplanetary Dimensions

The new exhibition of the Light Art Museum (LAM) titled *More than Human* presents nearly forty works by Hungarian and internationally renowned artists, including installations, projections and immersive projects. Included among the major names are Icelandic-Danish artist Ólafur Elíasson, a master of integrating natural elements into museum spaces, and the provocative British artist Matt Collishaw, known for works that directly impact the subconscious. The aim of the exhibition is to move beyond an anthropocentric worldview and reveal life from alternative perspectives, ranging from the molecular to the interplanetary scale.

Dénes P. Szabó



Photo: Zalán Ilyés | Source: Népszava

Occupying a floor area of more than two thousand square metres, *More than Human* is both spectacular and thought-provoking: the installations operating with light and sound highlight the fact that humanity is not at the centre of the world and there are other perspectives. This was the aim of the curators, Borbála Szalai and Barnabás Bencsik, who selected works that deliberately unsettle viewers and dislodge them from their habitual position. The exhibition title also refers to this posthuman way of thinking, the idea that we must now move beyond placing humankind at the centre of existence and recognise that we are merely a part of it, surrounded by countless other forms of life from bacteria to the largest mammals. This concept is embodied in the vast sphere positioned at the centre of the museum's space, with kaleidoscopic motifs flitting through its surface and creating a truly immersive experience once you step inside and find yourself surrounded by an infinite web of swirling lines, as if you had entered the domain of virtual reality. In this artwork by Viktor Vicsek and Rodrigo Guzman, the human perspective is genuinely overturned. "The intention behind the works displayed here is to create a sensory state in which the viewer is unsettled and becomes open to accepting other viewpoints and another logic," Barnabás Bencsik told our column "Visszhang" [Echo].



Photo: Zalán Ilyés | **Source:** Népszava

The Parrot Speaks

But what are these unusual perspectives? The Allora & Calzadilla artist duo gives voice to an endangered Puerto Rican parrot in their video installation *The Great Silence*, set near the Arecibo radio telescope. The film draws attention to an important contradiction: while scientists use the telescope to search for extraterrestrial intelligent life, the parrot narrator asks, "Why don't they want to listen to us?"

British artist Matt Collishaw's *Alpha Omega* features an astronaut's helmet displayed in a glass case. Reflected on the visor are chimpanzees touching and tapping at it, while within the helmet the image of a human skull flickers faintly, suggesting that not every journey has a happy ending. In another work, a three-channel video installation, Collishaw presents an underwater world inhabited by imaginary creatures whose bodies continually transform as they struggle to survive amid heavy metals, microplastics and industrial waste: what you see is both visually dazzling and bizarre. In the fuse* collective's surreal work *Mimicry*, generated with artificial intelligence, the figures – part plant, part insect hybrids – also undergo constant change.

Sculptures from Bacteria

The exhibition also features several artworks made using unconventional materials. Perhaps the most curious among them is Andrea Shin Ling's installation, which is 3D-printed from ancient cyanobacteria, the organisms that produced the Earth's oxygen billions of years ago and still play an active role in combating the greenhouse effect. The artist also presented sculptures created with a similar process at the Canada Pavilion of the ongoing Venice Biennale of Architecture.

What makes this work special is that it collaborates with microscopic living organisms rather than extracting resources from nature. These bacteria require continuous light, moisture and warmth, so they are 'looked after' in terrariums throughout the exhibition.

The project is rather spectacular, virtually evoking the realm of science fiction, while also conveying a deeper message: we should regard small organisms not as exploitable resources but as cooperating partners.

Visitors can also see sculptures made from unconventional materials by two Hungarian artists. Mónika Üveges's works, crafted from shaped wood, stainless steel, resin and muslin, resemble bodies that are half human and half cyborg, erasing the boundary between the natural and the artificial. Ágoston Balázs Kiss's installation evokes a laboratory with humanoid forms standing on either side, while at the centre there is a sculpture inspired by a trilobite, the arthropod that lived in the seas hundreds of millions of years ago. The three figures are connected by a network of tubes, as if linked on a biological or artificial level. The work focuses attention on the possible consequences of human interference with the natural course of life.

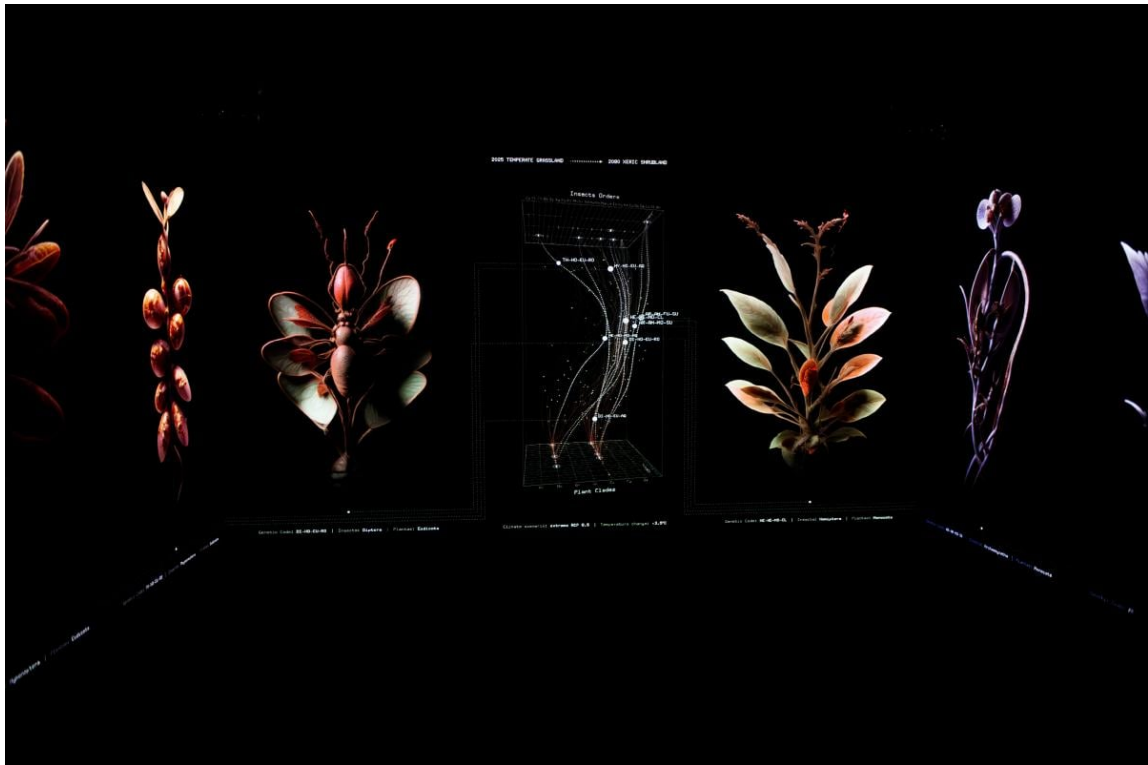


Photo: Zalán Ilyés | **Source:** Népszava

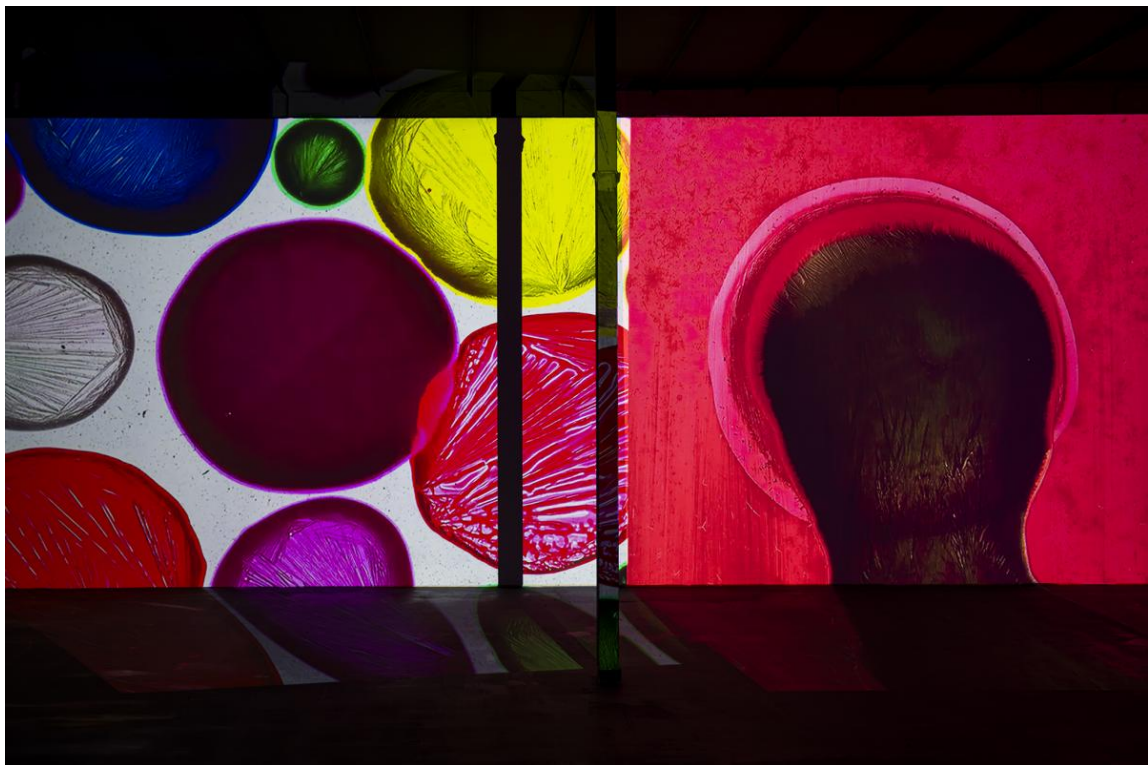


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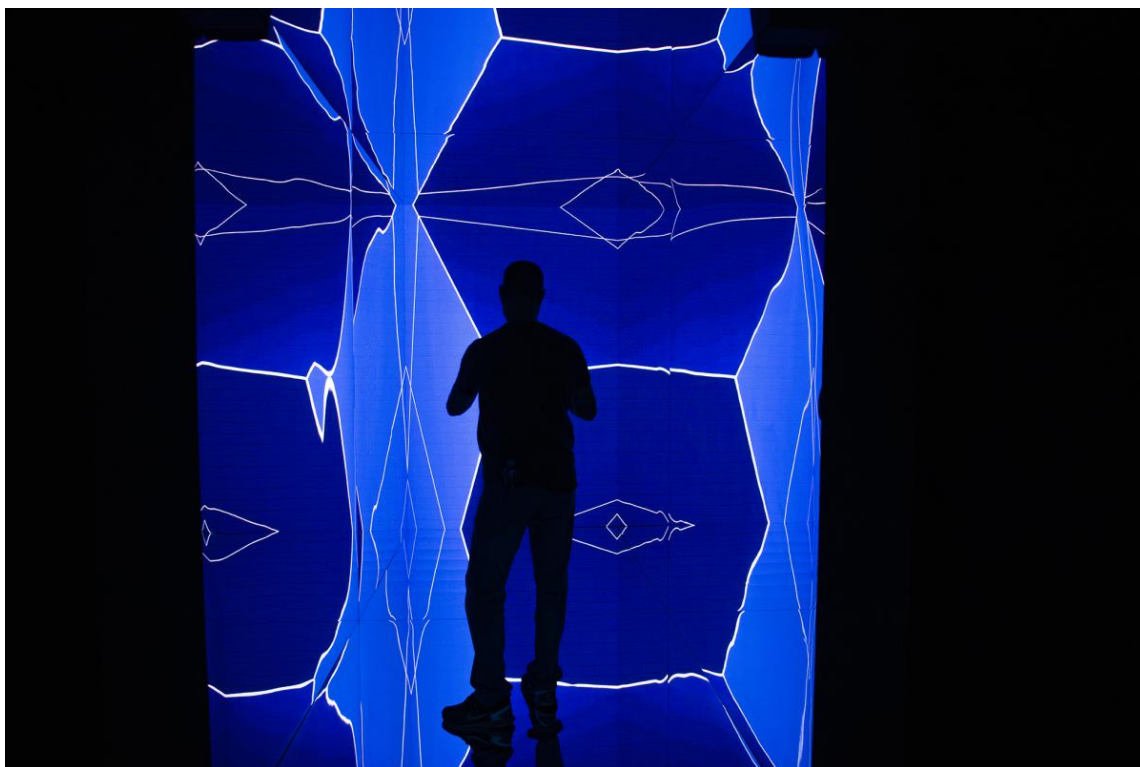


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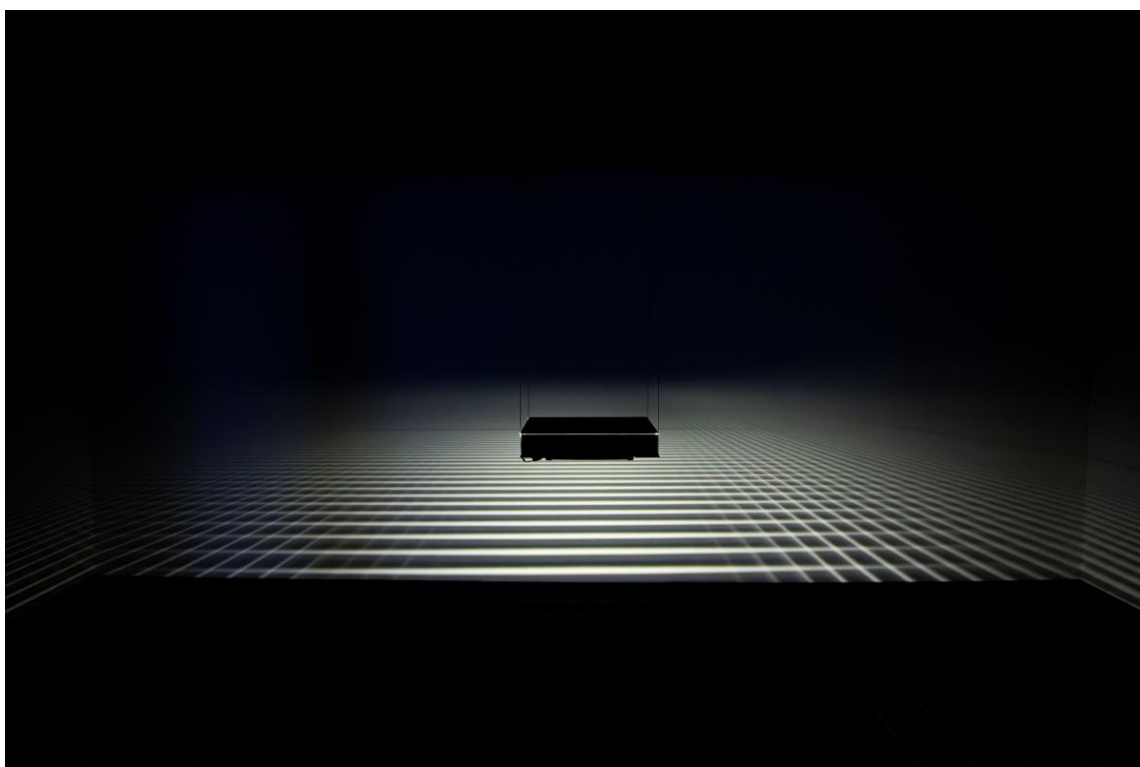


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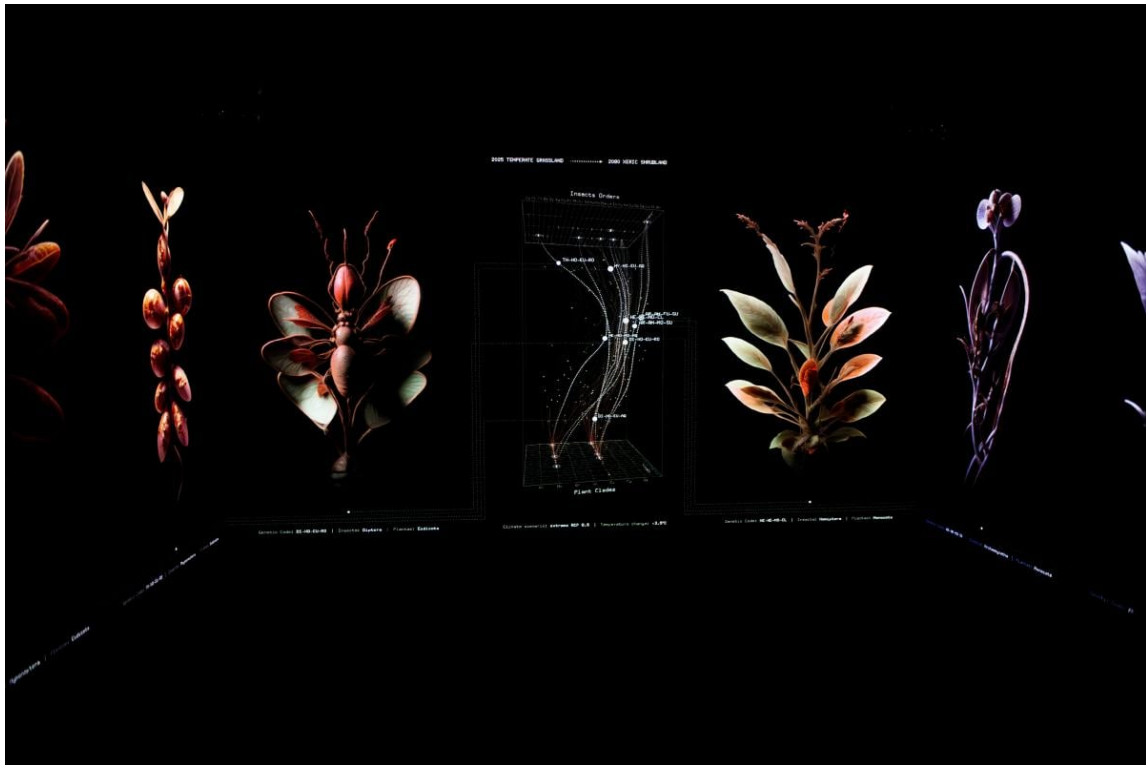


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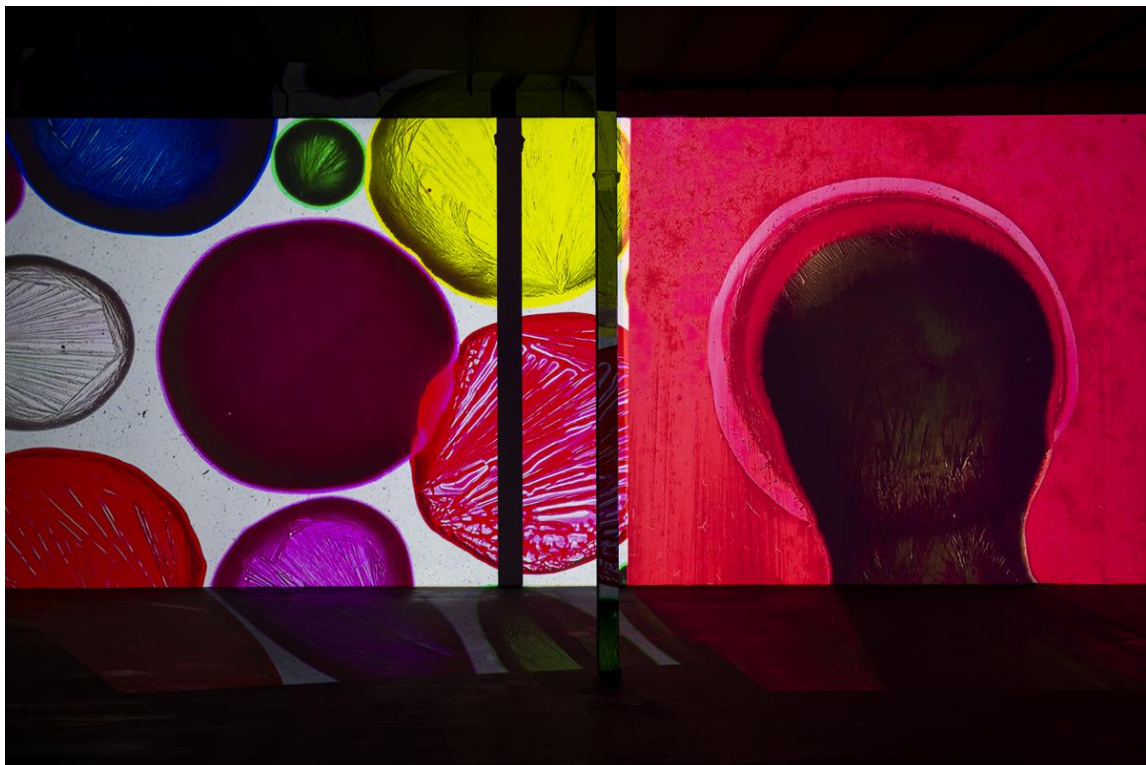


Photo: Zalán Ilyés | **Source:** Népszava

A River as a Legal Entity

“We see it as important that the posthuman approach should be increasingly a part of public discourse in Hungary, since it has long been part of the discussion in international academic

and artistic circles; this way of thinking forms the basis of green movements as our planet has reached a state where action must be taken. Such a mental shift, however, is difficult to achieve,” says Barnabás Bencsik, adding that, “exhibitions embracing these themes may help in retuning our way of thinking.”

“Since the Enlightenment, humanity has placed itself at the centre of the world, and the entire Industrial Revolution was built upon this Cartesian worldview, which led to the exploitation of the Earth’s resources and the colonisation of other continents. This human intervention has affected the planet so profoundly that it has given rise to a new geological epoch, called the Anthropocene,” explains Bencsik, adding that, “this is all due to fossil fuel extraction, i.e. oil and gas mining, as well as the increasingly polluted atmosphere.”

“Humankind feels entitled to exploit and deplete the environment without giving anything back. This mindset sustains the entire capitalist, profit-driven system of perpetual growth and exploitation, even though humans are equally part of the larger whole,” says the curator.

“By contrast, posthuman thought urges us to move beyond the anthropocentric perspective, i.e. we must understand that humankind is not the centre of everything, not perched at the top of a hierarchy but is merely a tiny part of a vast whole. Over the past few centuries, we have violated nature and upset ecological balance to such an extent that it is bound to strike back; the signs are already visible in the climate crisis, as climate activists keep reminding us,” Bencsik observes.

He cites a striking example: the New Zealand Parliament in Wellington voted to recognise the Whanganui River as a legal entity in 2017 at the request of the indigenous Māori. Change, therefore, has begun, but a long road still lies ahead for environmentalists and artists alike.