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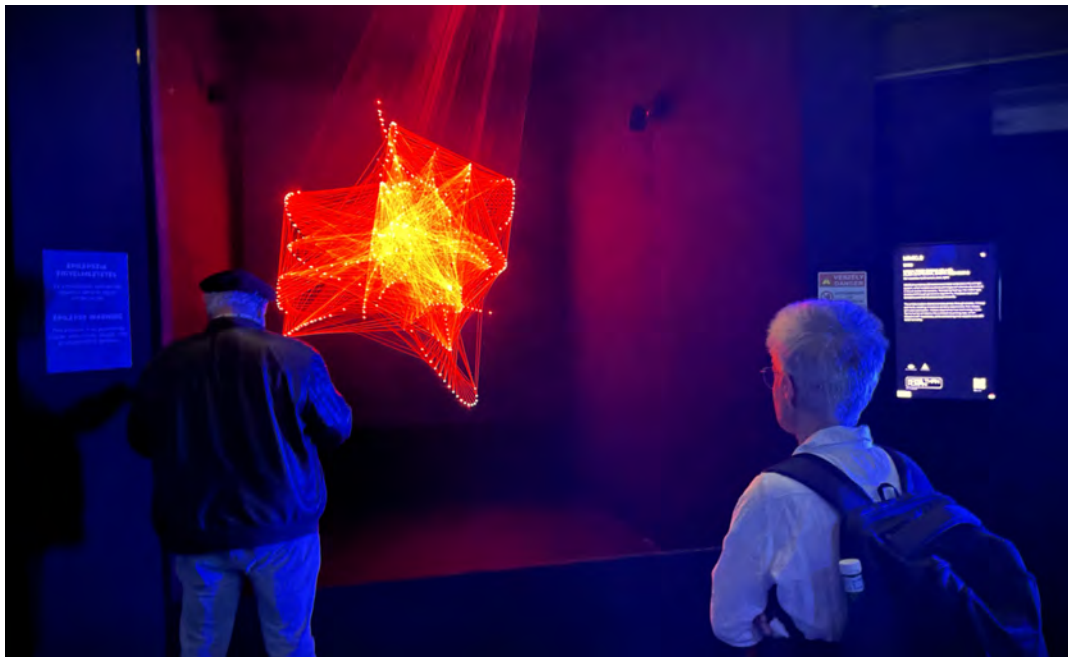
Cobweb Universe, Insect–plant Chimaeras and Oxygen-producing Cyanobacteria on Hold Street

[Tamás Vajna](#)

[SCIENCE](#)

The [Light Art Museum Budapest](#) (LAM) – founded and operated entirely from private funding – has reached a new level with its exhibition [More Than Human](#) open from early September until next summer. Located in the historic market-hall building on Hold Street, the institution, which [has put Hungary on the world map of contemporary art](#), presents a show curated by [Barnabás Bencsik](#) and Borbála Szalai. In selecting the works that fill the 2,000-square-metre space, they aimed not only for [immersivity](#) of high aesthetic quality capable of attracting large audiences, but also to keep pace with the international elite.

Their experiment has proved so successful that, having received congratulations from visiting experts from London's [Tate Gallery](#), they managed to acquire two seminal works by pioneers of light art, while, as the museum's artistic director Szabolcs Vida told Qubit, the institution also commissioned and received unique, site-specific works tailored to the Hold Street venue from members of the international avant-garde, representing an investment on the scale of hundreds of thousands of euros.



Visitors at the exhibition opened in the LAM in September 2025

Photo: Qubit

Pioneers

As in previous years, *More Than Human* focuses on works at the intersection of art and science: works based on scientific research that employ the latest technological solutions, explains Vida. According to him, the exhibition invites visitors to “discover the complex interconnections between humans, plants, animals, fungi and even geological processes that transcend the traditional boundaries of biology and embrace artificial intelligence and human-made entities as well.”

Otto Piene’s installation in 1966 was among the first in contemporary art to break away from the conventions of traditional projection. His celebrated piece *The Proliferation of the Sun* was conceived as a message of hope to a world living in the shadow of nuclear anxiety and Cold War tensions. As co-founder of the German ZERO group, Piene sought to apply the new technologies of his time. As Bencsik explains, the work reconstructed with museological precision in the Hold Street halls is “a key piece of the expanded cinema movement, which dismantled the traditional frameworks of projection. While Kodak carousel slide projectors were used in the original version, the images are now projected by six digital projectors, yet the vision remains unchanged: to create an immersive environment of light that counterbalances destruction with beauty, and violence with peace.”



Otto Piene: *The Proliferation of the Sun* (1966–67) at the exhibition opened in the LAM in September 2025
Photo: Dávid Bíró / Light Art Museum Budapest

Another defining, still active pioneer in the history of immersive projection is the American artist Anthony McCall, whose classic early work *Line Describing a Cone* (1973) is a 16-millimetre short film. According to the curator’s explanation, this epoch-making piece posed the radical question of whether film could exist without a screen. To provide an answer, McCall used a 16mm projector and a stage fog machine to render an invisible beam of light visible. In the installation at LAM, an animated line slowly ‘draws’ a circle over thirty minutes, creating a hollow cone of light which visitors can walk through.

“McCall’s intention was to deconstruct cinema by removing the screen and turning passive observers into active participants. The beam of light becomes a sculpture; the projection

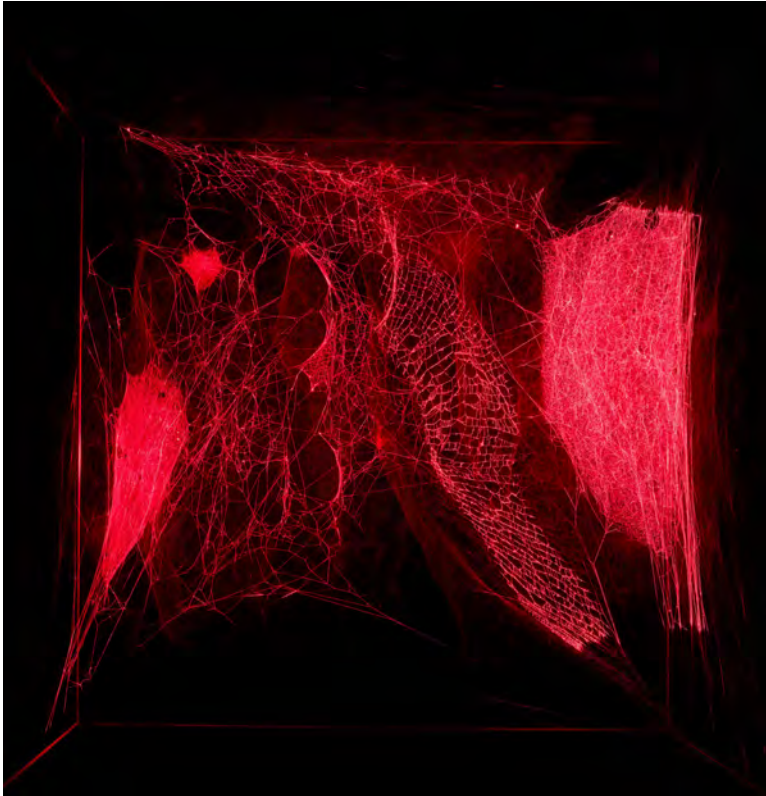
becomes a drawing. After a twenty-year break, McCall returned to art in the 2000s, when digital technology opened new possibilities, allowing him to shift from simple looped films to sophisticated digital animations. This iconic work continues to be a fundamental piece of contemporary immersive art, confirming that the most powerful innovations often arise from the simplest questions about the nature of art itself,” reads the curator’s statement.



Anthony McCall: *Line Describing a Cone* (1973) at the exhibition opened in the LAM in September 2025
Photo: Qubit

Spider universe

A striking example of contemporary ecological thinking is *How to Entangle the Universe in a Spider Web* (2018) by Tomás Saraceno, whose work equally draws inspiration from architecture, space exploration, science fiction, biology and geometry. In this installation, the Argentinian artist ‘collaborated’ with three specimens of *Cyrtophora citricola*, a tropical orb-weaver spider, and their relative, *Nephila edulis*, native to Australia, New Guinea, New Caledonia and New Zealand, commissioning them with weaving webs in a terrarium. These species are known for completely filling the space available to them with their silk threads. In the installation, a red laser slowly scans the structure of the densely-woven spider’s web.



Tomás Saraceno: *How to Entangle the Universe in a Spider Web?* (2018) at the exhibition opened in the LAM in September 2025

Photo: Dávid Bíró / Light Art Museum Budapest

The moving laser beam reveals the web's complex, architectonic structure. The interwoven geometries thus resemble unique galaxies floating in an ever-expanding, infinite landscape.

Lab-world

The central protagonists in *Picoplanktonics*, which was developed by the Swiss artist Andrea Shin Ling in collaboration with the Living Room Collective and the Department of Digital Building Technologies at ETH Zurich and debuted at the Biennale Architettura 2025 in Venice, are cyanobacteria, i.e. the microorganisms that made life on Earth as we know it possible.



Swiss artist Andrea Shin Ling's installation *Picoplanktonics* at the exhibition opened in the LAM in September 2025

Photo: Qubit

The living cyanobacterial structures resemble those ancient microbial colonies that began producing oxygen for the Earth's atmosphere two and a half billion years ago. In her research at ETH Zurich, Shin Ling developed a structure-building platform. The constructions 3D-printed from *Synechococcus* bacteria "consume" atmospheric carbon dioxide to produce oxygen and mineral compounds that strengthen their own structures. "Rather than extracting resources from nature, this work collaborates with microscopic organisms as active construction partners. The bacteria require constant light, moisture and warmth, which necessitates uninterrupted caring for the entire duration of the exhibition," said the curator.



A photosynthesising cyanobacterial culture in Andrea Shin Ling's installation at the exhibition opened in the LAM in September 2025

Photo: Qubit

Insect-plant-plant-insect evolution

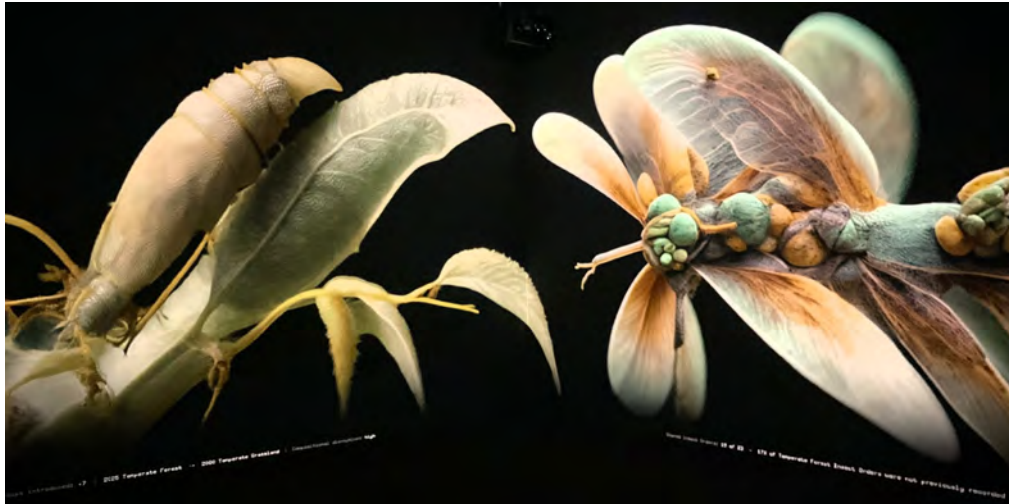
According to Szabolcs Vida, thanks to advances in biotechnology, neurotechnology and soft robotics, life has become a technological issue constructible in laboratories. "All-pervasive complex technical systems affect our bodies, our behaviour, our emotions and the way we interact with our environment," he explains. The Italian fuse* collective imagines hybrid collaborations between living organisms and artificial entities, thus expanding the very definition of life.



fuse*: *Mimicry* (2025) at the exhibition opened in the LAM in September 2025

Photo: Dávid Bíró / Light Art Museum Budapest

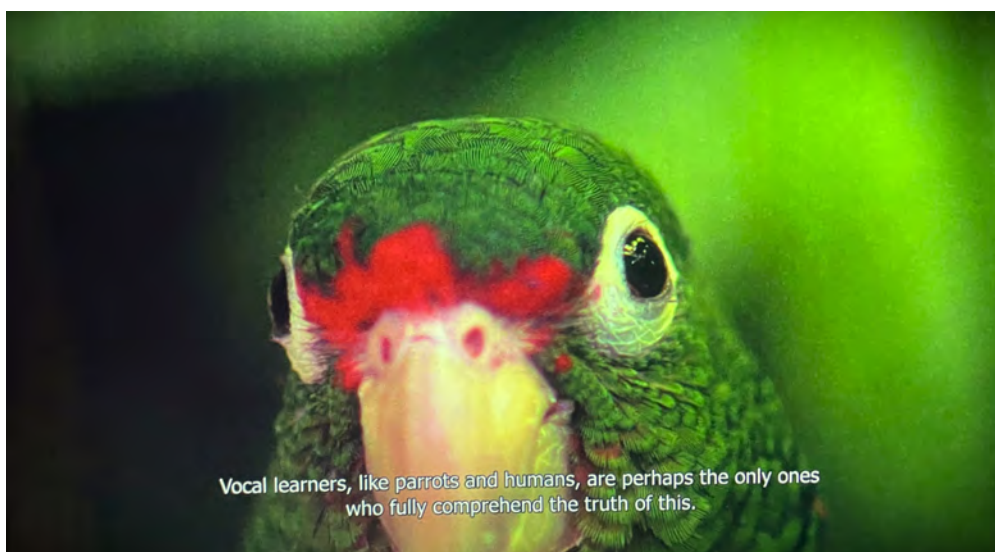
Their research-based work *Mimicry* explores the boundaries of imaginary species emerging from the hybridisation of insects and plants during a virtual process generated using artificial intelligence to simulate possible natural evolutionary paths. These beings might be manifestations of nature's survival strategies, such as evolutionary mimicry. They are living metaphors for cross-species hybridisation, allowing us to speculate and conceive monstrous yet plausible life forms rooted in patterns of coexistence.



Detail from *Mimicry* by the Italian fuse* at the exhibition opened in the LAM in September 2025
Photo: Qubit

Parrot and monkey mirrors

Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla give voice to the grievances of endangered Puerto Rican parrots living in the shadow of humanity's search for extraterrestrial intelligence. Their work questions why we pursue intergalactic communication, while ignoring the plight of local species on the brink of extinction.



Detail from Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla's *The Great Silence* (2014) at the exhibition opened in the LAM in September 2025

Photo: Qubit

“The 2014 video work *The Great Silence* challenges anthropocentric modes of thought by giving voice to an endangered Puerto Rican parrot living near the Arecibo radio telescope. While scientists scan the universe for intelligent extraterrestrial life, the parrot narrator asks, »Why don't they want to listen to us?« The work highlights the irony of seeking communication with distant beings, while disregarding local species driven to the edge of extinction by deforestation. Based on biosemiotic principles, the video suggests that intelligence exists beyond human understanding. The telescope and the parrot are not passive objects but active participants in the creation of meaning.”

Mat Collishaw's installation *AΩ* follows a similar line of thought: the visor of an astronaut's helmet placed in a vitrine reflects the curious faces of chimpanzees. The shadow of a human skull intermittently appears beside the reflections of our closest relatives, genuinely startling more sensitive visitors.



Mat Collishaw: *AΩ* (2016) at the exhibition opened in the LAM in September 2025

Photo: Dávid Bíró / Light Art Museum Budapest

According to the curatorial concept, the work both celebrates and questions humanity's desire of exploration, equally entailing the possibility of a return but also that of ultimate disappearance.

The contemporary Icelandic–Danish artist superstar Ólafur Elíasson's installation of coloured glass discs is a frequently cited classic, precisely because it transforms the very process of perception, “revealing how our understanding of reality changes through movement and sensory experience.”



Ólafur Eliasson: *Your welcome reflected* (2003) at the exhibition opened in the LAM in September 2025
Photo: Qubit

As Bencsik notes, “alongside their aesthetic and sensory impact, the exhibited works also provide thought-provoking alternatives to the utilitarian, anthropocentric mindset that has shaped the development of Eastern European societies since the change of the political system and which urgently needs to be reconsidered amid climate change, the global pollution of the natural environment and the alarming decline of biodiversity.”