

PRESS RELEASE

LUMEN PRIZE : SHORTLISTED ARTISTS 2023

23 SEPTEMBER 2023 — 27 JULY 2024

OPENING RECEPTION

FRIDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER, 6 — 8PM

Coinciding with the gallery's 8th birthday, ANNKA KULTYS GALLERY is pleased to partner with the Lumen Prize, a global competition for art created with technology, to present a special showcase of the 2023 Lumen Prize Shortlist. Selected from over 1600 entries submitted from 52 countries, the Shortlist comprises 35 works spread across eleven categories. Ranging from worlds crafted inside game engines to infinite duration text performances, and spanning NFTs that catalyze carbon mitigation strategies to speculative documentaries of new social-spiritual networks, the 2023 Lumen Prize Shortlist exhibition presents a stunning array of media and critical approaches to technology. Taken together, these works represent the cutting-edge of contemporary media art practices that ask after technology's complex entanglement with culture as well as speculate on its possible futures.

Founded in 2012 by former financial journalist Carla Rapoport, The Lumen Prize is organised annually by Lumen Art Projects, a UK-based initiative championing artists working with technology. The Prize's selection process acknowledges both emerging strains of practice (including the Metaversal Generative Art Award and Crypto Art categories) as well as geographically-specific discourses (like the HUA Award 華艺数奖, which is open to Chinese artists or artists/collectives working in China). More significantly still, the prize is one of few media art prizes that address the important topic of representation within the field (such as the Global Majority Award, which spotlights creatives whose voices are often left out of discourses on art and technology).

Exhibited within ANNKA KULTYS PHYGITAL, the gallery's experimental virtual reality gallery, the 2023 Lumen Prize Shortlist exhibition features 28 works by as many artists and collectives. Responding to such topical concerns as the infiltration of AI within every corner of contemporary life to the ecological footprint of emerging technologies like blockchain systems, these works adeptly address the most urgent issues of our time. Many of the 2023 Shortlisted artists, including Sarah Selby, Kyle MacDonald, Yujin Jung and Gaëtan Robillard, address hard-hitting political injustices and ecological meltdown head-on. Selby's *Raised by Google* (2019) explores the impacts of current data practices on our seemingly autonomous lives. Rhett Tsai's (Yuxiao Cai's) *How Deep Is the Dark Water?* (2023) is an interactive game that explores the complexities and trauma of warfare.

ANNKA KULTYS GALLERY

472 HACKNEY ROAD, UNIT 9, LONDON E2 9EQ

T +44 (0)74 5556 1887, WWW.ANNKAKULTYS.COM

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Meanwhile, Kyle MacDonald's poetic *Amends* series (2023) merges hand-blown glass sculpture and blockchain technology, forcing NFT buyers to offset the carbon footprint of their purchase before receiving the work.

Other artists including Jonas Lund, Egor Kraft, and Bianca Carague deploy systems thinking, speculative fiction, and collaborations with AI to generate future-leaning narratives that paint dizzyingly detailed renditions of worlds to come. Lund's *The Future of Something* (2023), presented at ANNKA KULTYS GALLERY earlier this year, is a series of AI-generated vignettes meditating on the increasingly complex relationship between human and synthetic intelligence. Carague's mesmerising *Terra Incognita* (2022) speculates on the future of childhood in 2050: when all new life is synthetically reared. Allowing space for the artists to unpack the conceptual richness of their work in their own words, a special publication of micro-interviews with the artists is available online at ANNKA KULTYS website.

The technical and conceptual sophistication of these works are matched by the VR venue showcasing the Lumen Prize 2023 shortlist. Accessible via Oculus headsets at the gallery, the 1,000 m² virtual environment offers a symbiotic "digital gallery walls for digital works". The virtual gallery space at ANNKA KULTYS PHYGITAL is tailored to the specifications of each unique artwork, enabling visitors to experience the works within the original specifications their creators intended.

ANNKA KULTYS GALLERY is a hybrid commercial art space that merges physical and digital experiences. Founded by Annka Kultys in 2015, the East London-based gallery has rapidly become a leading art gallery for emerging artists (particularly millennials), who engage with technology (and more recently blockchain technology) in both traditional and digital media. Through a robust program of exhibitions that showcase these artists alongside a commitment to promoting the hybrid "phygital" approach, Kultys aims to shape the discourse on contemporary art and technology while pushing the boundaries of what is achievable within both physical and digital gallery spaces.

For all press enquiries, please contact Lauren or Annka
+44 74 555 61 887 press@annkakultys.com

Opening Hours: Wednesday — Saturday, 12 — 6pm

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