



## **VERTIGO**

# **NEW SOLO EXHIBITION BY AWARD-WINNING ARTIST NYE THOMPSON AT EAST QUAY**

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May – Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023**

**Opening Party: Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2023, 6pm**

**East Quay, Harbour Road, Watchet, TA23 0AQ**

Returning to the UK with a ground-breaking new solo exhibition at East Quay in Watchet, Somerset, internationally-acclaimed artist Nye Thompson presents *Vertigo* which will open our eyes to the world of surveillance, satellites, and the new frontier-space. *Vertigo* is Nye Thompson's biggest solo show to date and will present two major projects including the world premiere of a new performance piece *CU Soon* and a reprise of the 2019 video installation *INSULAE* (Of the Island).

*Vertigo* is curated by East Quay's George Harwood Smith. East Quay is Somerset's brand-new cultural venue, which was awarded National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status by Arts Council England in November and focuses on nurturing creativity and curiosity.

As a software designer turned artist best known for her experimental software architectures, Nye Thompson's work is included in major international institutions including Tate Modern, The Barbican, The Lowry, The V&A, and The Louvre, as well as international and UK private collections. Described by *Vogue* as "*the new Big Brother*" and dubbed "*a contemporary Jacques Cousteau*" by legendary Bob & Roberta Smith, Nye Thompson received the 2021 Lumen Prize Gold Award for a short film *UNINVITED* in collaboration with *UBERMORGEN*, and was recently shortlisted for the Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2023.

In this exhibition, Nye Thompson continues to push boundaries. Her fascinating work bridges the gap between technology and art with her use of Machine Learning/AI, Bespoke Software Architecture, Data Archiving & Mapping in the creation of Film, Drawings, Live Machine Performances and Mixed Media installation. *Vertigo* explores different aspects of our relationship with the burgeoning ecosystem of satellites— hidden machines orbiting far above our heads – that we cannot see for ourselves but are deeply connected to.

Premiering as part of the exhibition, *CU Soon* is a performance for satellites and humans, and continues Thompson’s trajectory of making artworks for a machine audience. Here she is using space as her gallery. For this performance, Thompson has transmitted a series of affectionate postcards out into space using radio signals. During the brief transmissions these postcards can be received by passing satellites. The satellites collect and broadcast them back to Earth. During this human-satellite dialogue each postcard image is entirely deconstructed and created anew – transformed by its extra-terrestrial journey.

Additionally, having already toured the world since 2019, Nye Thompson will also present *INSULAE (Of the Island)* - a tour around British coastal waters, generated from AI-reconstructed satellite mapping imagery. Using footage created in Google Earth, this video installation contemplates the impact of island geography on national identity, taking the viewer on a journey endlessly circling the entire British mainland, obsessively patrolling our watery borders.

Commenting on *CU Soon*, Nye Thompson says: *"I've long been fascinated by the hidden domain of earth orbit and the satellite ecosystem that voraciously inhabits it. This infrastructure has an ever increasing impact on our daily lives but is so invisible, so technically complex and so heavily gatekept that it's really hard to engage with. I wanted to find a way that someone like myself - without any specialist engineering expertise - could have a more direct relationship with a satellite that isn't mediated by government or telecoms organisations. And also explore how a satellite could be an active participant in a work of art."*

George Harwood Smith, Curator of East Quay, comments: *"We are delighted to be working with Nye Thompson on Vertigo. This exhibition is the third time Contains Art CIO has partnered with Lumen Art Projects to present works by an award-winning digital artist - and the first time in our new galleries at East Quay. It's exciting to commission brand-new work by Nye and bring her artwork to new audiences in West Somerset and the South-West. East Quay and Contains Art aim to facilitate social, economic, and environmental discourse through culture. Nye's digital work reflects our objective to platform new and exciting artists, raise new ideas and open minds, creating informative, immersive, and fun exhibitions."*

Carla Rapoport, Lumen Art Projects' founder, comments: *"Creating opportunities for artists and sharing art made with technology is at the core of what we do at Lumen. We are so pleased to return to East Quay for our third exhibition here, this time with 2021 Lumen Prize Gold Winner Nye Thompson. Working with Nye over the last few years, it has been a pleasure to see her practice develop and get the recognition it deserves. Having enabled the original commissioning*

*of INSULAE it's wonderful to see this exhibition come to life. We are excited to see VERTIGO, which is sure to be an incredible exhibition”.*

This exhibition is commissioned by Contains Art CIO, presented in partnership with Lumen Art Projects and funded by Arts Council England.

## Notes to Editors

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| Title        | VERTIGO   |
| Dates        | Saturday 20 <sup>th</sup> May – Saturday 2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2023   |
| Times        | Mon-Sun 10am-5pm<br>Opening Party: Saturday 20 <sup>th</sup> May, 6pm   |
| Admission    | Free. More information at <a href="http://www.eastquaywatchet.co.uk/articles/vertigo">www.eastquaywatchet.co.uk/articles/vertigo</a>  |
| Locations    | East Quay Gallery, Harbour Road, Watchet, TA23 0AQ  |
| Social Media | @nye.thompson, @eastquaywatchet, @lumen_prize   |
| Website      | <a href="http://www.nyethompson.net">www.nyethompson.net</a> , <a href="http://www.eastquaywatchet.co.uk">www.eastquaywatchet.co.uk</a> ,<br><a href="http://www.lumenartprojects.com">www.lumenartprojects.com</a> |

## Nye Thompson

Nye Thompson (she/her b. 1966) is an artist turned software designer turned artist. She is known for her experimental software architectures exploring network-embedded power dynamics and machinic visions of the world. After a Fine Art degree at YBA-era Goldsmiths, Thompson took a sideways step to immerse herself in the newly created World Wide Web. She spent the next two decades designing software, focused on the human-machine interface and big data analytics before returning to artistic practice with an MA in 2013. Thompson is based in the UK and operates between London and mid-Wales.

In 2016 her first solo show Backdoored.io - described by C4 News as “too shocking to broadcast” - became global clickbait and triggered an international government complaint. Since then, Thompson has exhibited around the UK, and internationally, including Tate Modern, The Barbican, The Lowry, The V&A, ZKM Karlsruhe, Ars Electronica and The Louvre. Her work has been featured on BBC, C4, CNN, the Guardian and Wired. She has been called "the new Big Brother" (Vogue) and "a contemporary Jacques Cousteau" (Bob & Roberta Smith). Thompson

was a finalist for the Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2023. Thompson and UBERMORGEN were recipients of the Lumen Prize Gold Award 2021 for their short film UNINVITED.

## CONTAINS ART CIO

The galleries at East Quay are run by a charity, Contains Art CIO (charity number 1193931), which is founded on the belief that who you are, where you live and what you have, should not constrain access to creativity and culture. Its purpose is to raise ideas, open minds, invite discussion, and encourage a social, economic and environmental conversation through culture, as well as bringing simple joy, beauty and wonder into people's lives.

## EAST QUAY WATCHET

East Quay is a brand new arts venue, which opened in September 2021 in the harbour town of Watchet, West Somerset. It is home to two contemporary art galleries, 11 artist studios, a paper mill, a geology workshop, print studio, restaurant, education space and 5 extraordinary accommodation pods, all on the quayside in Watchet, on Somerset's coast. It's run by Onion Collective CIC, a Watchet-grown, female-led, not-for-profit, social enterprise.

## LUMEN ART PROJECTS

Lumen Art Projects is a leading provider of Art and Technology services around the world. A UK-based digital arts champion founded in 2018, LAP curates exhibitions, commissions new artworks and creates varied events for art venues, cultural institutions and public spaces around the world. For more information visit: [www.lumenprize.com](http://www.lumenprize.com) and [www.lumenartprojects.com](http://www.lumenartprojects.com)

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