FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
21.10.2021

For more Information, please DM @lumen_prize

AI Horror Movie Carries Off Lumen Gold

The Lumen Prize for Art and Technology awarded its coveted Gold Award with a cash prize of US$4,000 to UK artist Nye Thompson and UBERMORGEN for *UNINVITED*, the world's first horror movie for and by machines.

Celebrating its 10th Awards Ceremony at the Barbican Center, Lumen also presented eight further awards for a total of $11,500 in prize money across the following categories: Still Image, Moving Image, Futures, BCS Immersive Environment, 3D/Interactive, Global South, Nordic and Student.

Commenting on the 2021 Gold Award Winner, Lumen Jury Panel Christiane Paul of The Whitney Museum of American Art said "In an inventive and creative way, *UNINVITED* succeeds in using AI to construct a horror movie out of CCTV footage, pointing to the dark and oppressive potential in machine learning and surveillance."

This year's Lumen Prize was the most competitive yet with 1200 plus submissions from over 60 different countries. Selected from 35 shortlisted artists, the Lumen Prize winners were determined by its Jury Panel of:

Christiane Paul - Adjunct Digital Curator, Whitney Museum of American Art
Ben Vickers - CTO, The Serpentine Gallery, UK
Melanie Lenz - Digital Curator, The V&A
Nathan Ladd - Assistant Curator, Tate Britain
Boris Magrini - Curator, Hek Basel, Switzerland

The Lumen Prize is owned by Lumen Art Projects, an independent arts organisation based in Wales, which exists to build opportunities globally for artists who create with technology.

Details of the nine winners honored at the Barbican on 21/10 are:

2021 LUMEN PRIZE GOLD AWARD - $4,000
UNINVITED
Nye Thomspon & UBERMORGEN
Link to work here

UNINVITED is a horror film for machine networks and human-machine organisms exploring the nature of perception and realism of the unknown and the terror of angst and exhaustion within emergent network consciousness. This generative work (2018–) is a self-evolving networked organism watching and generating a recursive 'horror film' scenario using mechatronic Monsters - digital flesh running machine learning algorithms. The work is described by the artists as a radically new creature looking at the world, hearing the universe through millions of hallucinogenic virally-abused sensors and creating a hybrid nervous system.

Jury Panel member Boris Magrini comments: "This absurd and grotesque work is successful in that it exaggerates the darker aspects of new technologies such as surveillance cameras and artificial intelligence. By creating a programme that makes (...) a film through the analysis of recordings made by CCTV, especially a film not intended for a human audience, the artists actually put their finger on the horror of the surveillance society."

2021 LUMEN PRIZE STILL IMAGE AWARD - $1,000
Sponsored by: Photomonitor
Sylvia
Ziv Schneider
Link to work here

Instagram is full of wannabes, but there was only one *Sylvia*. Co-written with AI, *Sylvia* is a storytelling experiment that disrupted the virtual influencer landscape. Unlike most of her virtual peers, who are designed to appear young forever, Sylvia was designed to age rapidly. The project was posted to Instagram as @myfriendsylvia from July to November 2020, and featured images of Sylvia as she aged five decades, from 30 to 80 years-old. The project challenged conventions around the design of virtual humans; including aging and death to the design process.

Jury Panel Member Christiane Paul comments: "Through a conceptually simple gesture, Sylvia manages to raise questions about self-representation and its conventions on Instagram. The

AI-generated simulation effectively supports the concept of questioning synthetic, filtered identities, and the 'forced' process of aging adds an interesting twist and subverts beauty paradigms."

2021 LUMEN PRIZE MOVING IMAGE AWARD - $1,000
El Salto (The Jump/The Waterfall) 2021
Juan Covelli
Link to work here

El Salto (The Jump/ The Waterfall) 2020 tackles the policies of technology, using a machine-lens to show how the digital reshapes our conception of natural surroundings and landscapes. It discovers ways of thinking and understanding our surroundings framed within a specific culture and temporality. In this work, a screen projection surface sits atop the El Salto waterfall in Bogota, Colombia, recalling device-screens, which today replace painting and photography as the preferred site for representation of reality. By means of neural networks, alternative landscapes are created and projected upon the screen surface. In this narrative fiction, the landscape is not made from an anthropocentric view but from that of the machine.

Jury Panel Member Melanie Lenz comments: "A sumptuous and thought-provoking work that critically examines perceptions of 'natural' landscapes."

2021 LUMEN PRIZE 3D/INTERACTIVE AWARD - $1,000
Zoom, Click, Waltz
Sarah Choo Jing
Link to work here

Zoom, click, waltz is a multimedia installation comprising 13 LED screens depicting individuals in various states of "performance", while isolated within separate window frames. What began as an attempt to communicate with neighbours during Circuit Break, developed into an imagined possibility of individuals connecting through dance. Over a period of 2 months, residents received mailed instruction requests to perform at an interval spanning 30 minutes. These recordings were at times effective, others, futile. Various subjects' responses range from active to passive; with individuals participating in modes of conscious performance, and others nonchalant, in contemplation.

Jury Panel Member Nathan Ladd comments: "The artist has created a beautiful and compelling installation to create a patchwork of vignettes of personal, intimate moments during lockdown."

2021 LUMEN PRIZE BCS IMMERSIVE ENVIRONMENT AWARD - $1,000
Sponsored by: [BCS, Chartered Institute for IT](#)
I'd rather be in a dark silence than
Dejha Ti & Ania Catherine
[Link to work here](#)

I'd rather be in a dark silence than (2020) is a signal isolating/blocking trench coat. Created in partnership with MoCDA, the coat merges conceptual art, fashion, and function. The visually absurd pockets are lined with military grade fabric to keep wireless technologies offline—a technique primarily used in law enforcement and digital forensics. Devices and RFID objects sealed in the dark pockets are unable to be reached, traced, hacked, nor monitored. For "I'd rather be in a dark silence than" the exhibition at Factory Berlin, the artists took an experiential approach, designing a world and a multimedia interpretation that conveyed the coat's function. Audience-participants were immersed in a multisensory experience exploring the subjects of extractive technologies, data privacy and surveillance, in which they were both observers and also subjects.

Jury Panel Member Melanie Lenz comments: "An exceptional collaborative piece that raises important questions about data privacy."

2021 LUMEN PRIZE FUTURES AWARD - $1,000
Amazon Air
Gottfried Haider
[Link to work here](#)

Air cushions, as they are being delivered as part of Amazon orders or other online retailers, are generally being inflated at the very moments the order is being fulfilled with the ambient room air from the warehouse. Each shipping box thus carries with it a "sample" of the work situation and environment, which is generally hidden to us (online) consumers. In this work Gottfried Haider reconstructs this situation quasi forensically through means of air analysis, performed by a scientific lab, which identifies the specific organic compounds in samples received from different warehouses. Most of those compounds are classified as irritants, health or environmental hazards. In each case, a synthetic resin cast permanently preserves a cushion containing a sample of air – and thus an "echo of labor". The enclosed results of the air analysis allow conclusions about the specific conditions in the Fulfillment Centers at the time of shipment.

Jury Panel Member Boris Magrini comments: "The company Amazon has often been at the centre of criticism because of the difficult conditions of its employees. This work, which is based on an analysis of the air in Amazon's shipping packages, takes a further critical look at the conditions of the workers, in a surprising and ingenious way. The work convinces with its

simplicity, conceptual brilliance, which in this case perfectly matches its critical social discourse."

2021 LUMEN PRIZE GLOBAL SOUTH AWARD - $1,000
Sponsored by: [Radiant Law](#)
IGÚN
Minne Atairu
[Link to work here](#)

Igún is an exploration of bronze heads that could have been produced, should the 1897 British invasion not have occurred in Benin Kingdom. To investigate this gap, Atairu trained Generative Adversarial Network (GANs) to create synthetic versions of Benin Bronze heads. The 1897 British punitive expedition led to the destruction of the Royal Palace in Benin Kingdom, deposition of the Oba (King), looting of over 3000 ritual and ceremonial objects, and the subsequent sale of the objects to private and institutional collectors in Europe. Through explorations with Igún—an AI-powered bronze caster, Atairu reimagines the creative possibilities that could have emerged during 17-year interregnum. What could bronze heads look like? What bronze styles would have emerged?

Jury Panel Member Ben Vickers comments: "Exactly the type of exploration that I think AI should be focused on. Powerful framing (...) of the British role in the destruction of culture and the dreaming of what was lost through A.I. I love everything about this project."

2021 LUMEN PRIZE NORDIC AWARD - $1,000
Sponsored by: [Sørlandets Kunstmuseum](#)
Centaur
Pontus Lidberg
with Cecilie Waagner-Falkenstrøm
[Link to work here](#)

The title "Centaur", inspired by the half-horse half-human creature from Greek mythology, is also the name of a computer-science concept that elevates human qualities by combining artificial and human intelligence. Choreographer and filmmaker Pontus Lidberg's unique, poetic voice—where emotion and the subconscious are among the core elements—explores what happens when dancers encounter a newly developed Artificial Intelligence program. Does technology change us, or simply reflect who we've always been? The AI developed exclusively for the work, is both co-creator and participant. It creates choreographic composition based on multiple data sets such as planetary movements, swarm technology, deconstructed Greek tragedy and the dancers' movements that is tracked and has been collected throughout the creative process.

Jury Panel Member Nathan Ladd comments: "A beautifully rendered investigation into how contemporary dance can be challenged and enriched through the integration of machine learning. Intersections of the body and technology and exchange between human and artificial intelligence was very compelling."

2021 LUMEN PRIZE STUDENT AWARD - $1,000
Sponsored by: Infinite Objects
Arcadia Inc.
Cezar Mocan
Link to work here

A work of speculative fiction that responds to the use of landscape photography as a carrier for brand ideologies, on the computer desktop and beyond. The fictional company proposes the synthetic landscape as a "clean, context-free alternative to nature imagery". Cezar Mocan is currently a research resident at NYU ITP.

Carla Rapoport, Executive Director at Lumen Art Projects, comments, "A poignant and visually striking work that raises important questions about consumerism, branding and identity."