

Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts
Doctoral School

LIGHT SEANCE

interactive light installation

[mirror, wood, flashlight, dimension variable]
Kunsthalle Budapest (2015)

DLA - Doctor of Liberal Arts
Masterwork

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Tamás Szvet:

LIGHT SEANCE

“The unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close it may be.”¹ Walter Benjamin

Made especially for the space of the Kunsthalle Budapest, the installation *ó Light Seance* (2015-) [Fig.1-10.] *ó* seeks to transpose artistic research into practice by actively involving the viewer. In these works which depend on the recipient’s activity, the viewer is recast as a researcher, creator and discoverer, and the works are projected in the exhibition space by means of light controlled by the viewer. The installation is a part of the DLA *ó Doctor of Liberal Arts ó* practice based artistic research of light and perception.

The interactive light installations give us insights into Hungarian light art in the past ninety years. The exhibited reflections are installed on mirror surfaces in the dark exhibition space, which the viewers can project on the walls with the help of torches. The works are placed in chronological order, so the further in the viewer goes the earlier works of light-art she or he will find.

The archive images show already not *ó* or in a changed way *ó* existing light based works. The difficulty to keep these works derives from the medium, since it’s light based, - as in the case of media installations - mostly created for an event, space specifically, losing their original form in a little while. Immaterial works (light, digital or virtual) cannot be seen or perceived without a technical medium. After the shows, the works do not exist in the physical sense. Documenting is especially important in this instance; however, photography and video are, for the most part, unable to capture the environment of the work, its intellectual, physical and spatial aspects *ó* its aura. Hard to preserve and hard to perceive, the “aura” is in the focus of this research. How can the aura of a technology-based work be preserved and conveyed?

By conjuring up the creations of artists past and present, the artistic research focuses on a perhaps less visible trend in Hungarian art, which resides in the mutually inspirational borderland of art and science.

¹ Walter BENJAMIN: *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books 1968/2007) Online: Accessed January 21. 2018. Available from: <https://mediastudiesrepository.wordpress.com/2014/06/13/understanding-walter-benjamins-concept-of-aura/>

Reflections

The exhibition refers to Hungarian artists who employ light in many different ways to create works of art. The list was drawn up with the intention of exploring this area, but it is by no means exhaustive. Arranged side by side, twelve installations demonstrate the changes in technology and content, as well as numerous interesting phenomena, including the relationship with the process of making the work. While László Moholy-Nagy described one of his plans to a factory over the telephone, Attila Csörg constructs his machines himself. Through concepts ranging from the Utopian to the spiritual use of light, it transpires that this medium too is able to convey a vast array of messages. Clearly too different eras have their own light, since light sources are also subject to continuous change.

László Alexander's *Light Organ* [Fig.11.] is considered to be the first Hungarian related work of light art, which he presented in Kiel in 1925. László Moholy-Nagy himself evoked the performance that visualises sounds by means of coloured lights in his *Light-Space Modulator* [Fig.12.], created between 1922 and 1930. The illuminated construction projected a permanently changing shadow play in the exhibition space, which the artist then recorded on film. His footage is more than a document, as is Attila Csörg's 1996 *Hemisphere* [Fig.13.], where the human eye perceives the revolving source of light in a different way from the camera. Seeing (perceiving) the phenomenon requires time and a device capable of recording it (a camera). György Kepes's works revealed this very realm invisible to the eye. His 1970 *Photo-Elastic Pavement* [Fig.14.] is an interactive walking surface which, by means of its sensors, reacts to the movement of the pedestrian with continuously modulating lights. Nicolas Schöffer, who developed the theory of light-space-time dynamics, created large-scale mobile sculptures for public spaces and occasionally even road vehicles. The largest of his works, *La Tour Lumière Cybernétique* (1963) [Fig.15.], would have been a 324-metre-high tower of light. A similar but accomplished work of his (currently under reconstruction) is in Liège, which raises one of the fundamental problems of technology based works. Gábor Csongor Szigeti's collection of flashing lights, *PULSE 2.0* (2013) [Fig.16.] records these very moments of running - not running. Attila Csáji reverses an irreversible process in his large-scale public-space projection *Returning* [Fig.17.] that was presented in Copenhagen in 2002. A candle burns out and then relights. A wonderful example of light art occurring in time is Bálint Bolygó's *SHM Lissajous* (2001-2006) [Fig.18.] where a pendulum set in motion by the viewer scratches soot off a sheet of glass, letting through the light from the projector behind it. This way the installation continuously (re)writes itself. Lajos Dargay's 17-metre-

high *Tower of Light* (1978) [Fig.19.] consists of 10 storeys and involves interactive use by the viewer. Its electronic brain assigns various different movements and light actions to acoustic noises and sounds in its environment. In this way, the work continuously transformed. Exhibited in 2009 and using UV light, András Mengyán's *Polyphonic Visual Space III*. [Fig.20.] analyses from the viewpoint of perception the simultaneous and subsequent harmony of events occurring in space. Gyula Várnai's *One Rare Moment I*. [Fig.21.] location-specific light installations set in motion the space of the Kiscell Museum in 2006 by projecting the structure of the building onto that space. The unsteady deck of the aisle of the former church rendered insecure the perception of space and time. Erik Mátrai's *Sphere* [Fig.22.], a UV light installation was first exhibited in 2007, and gradually it assumed a form that incorporated the viewer. Mátrai explores the spiritual layers of light by means of light and media art. (í)

PROJECT WEBSITE:

Documentation by Tamas SZVET, Accessed January 21. 2018. Available from:

<http://szvettamas.com/2016/06/interview-video-by-philipp-helga-light.html>

VIDEO DOCUMENTATION:

2015 Kunsthalle Budapest (HU)

Interview / Philipp HELGA, Kunsthalle, Accessed January 21. 2018. Available from:

https://youtu.be/Mwpw_HmVnbw

Video documentation by Tamas SZVET, Accessed January 21. 2018. Available from:

<https://vimeo.com/126592861>

2015 LUMINA - Hommage à Kepes György, Deák 17 Galéria, Budapest (HU)

Video documentation by Tamas SZVET, Accessed January 21. 2018. Available from:

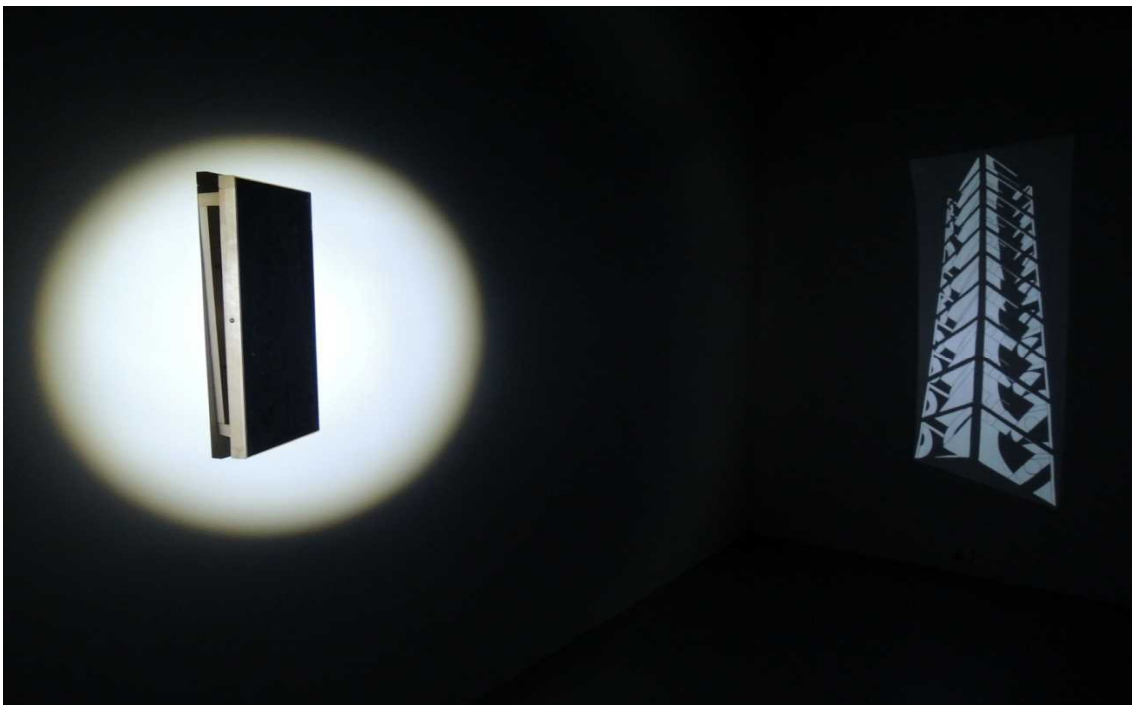
<https://youtu.be/Kj2J5YjnfaU>

2016 Helsinki Magyar Kulturális és Tudományos Központ - Galleria U, Helsinki (FI)

Video documentation by Tamas SZVET, Accessed January 21. 2018. Available from:

<https://youtu.be/fLdf2N1A0lk>

APPENDIX



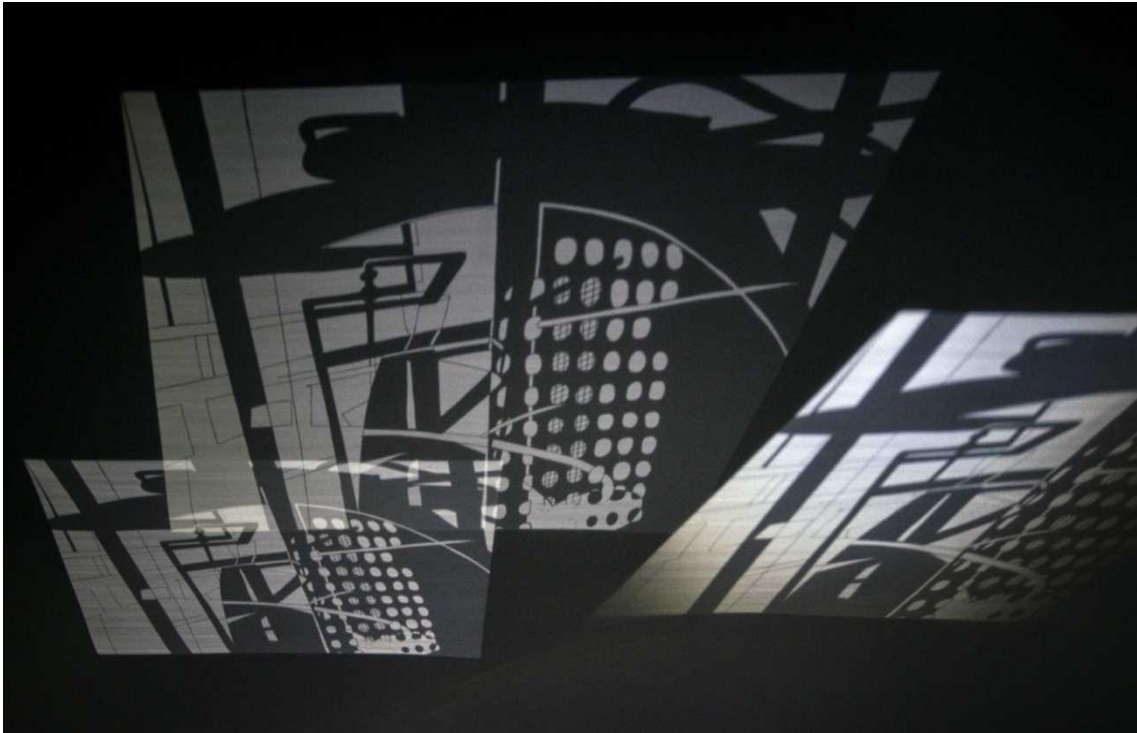
[Fig.1-2.] Tamás SZVET: LIGHT SEANCE (2015) interactive light installation, mirror, wood, flashlight, dimension variable, Kunsthalle Budapest (HU)



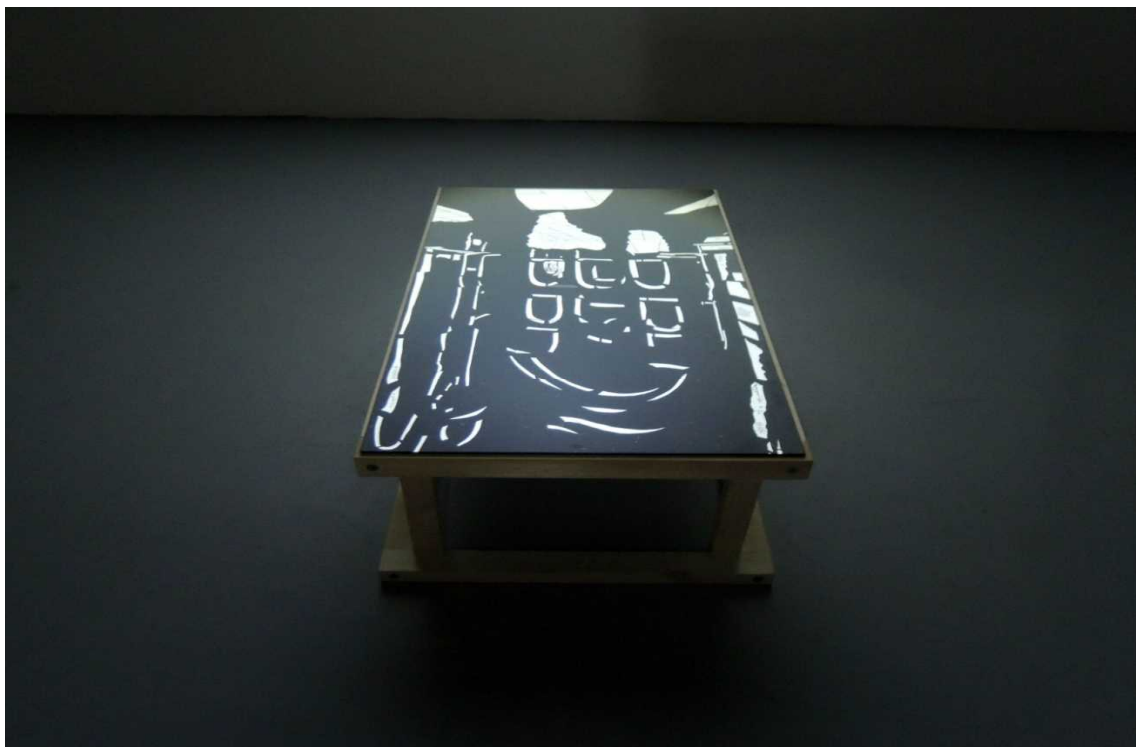
[Fig.3.] Tamás SZVET: LIGHT SEANCE (2015) interactive light installation, mirror, wood, flashlight, dimension variable, Kunsthalle Budapest (HU)



[Fig.4.] Tamás SZVET: LIGHT SEANCE (2015) interactive light installation, mirror, wood, flashlight, dimension variable, Kunsthalle Budapest (HU)



[Fig.5-6.] Tamás SZVET: LIGHT SEANCE (2015) interactive light installation, mirror, wood, flashlight dimension variable, Kunsthalle Budapest (HU)



[Fig.7-8.] Tamás SZVET: LIGHT SEANCE (2015) interactive light installation, mirror, wood, flashlight, dimension variable, Kunsthalle Budapest (HU)



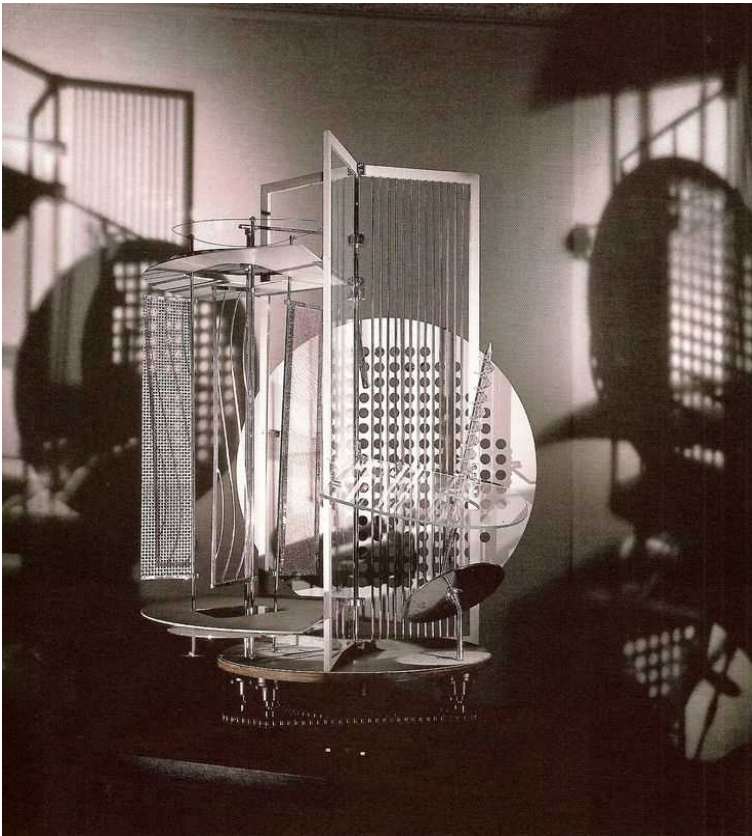
[Fig.9.] Tamás SZVET: LIGHT SEANCE (2015) interactive light installation, mirror, wood, flashlight, dimension variable, Kunsthalle Budapest (HU)



[Fig.10.] Tamás SZVET: LIGHT SEANCE (2015) interactive light installation, mirror, wood, flashlight, dimension variable, Kunsthalle Budapest (HU)



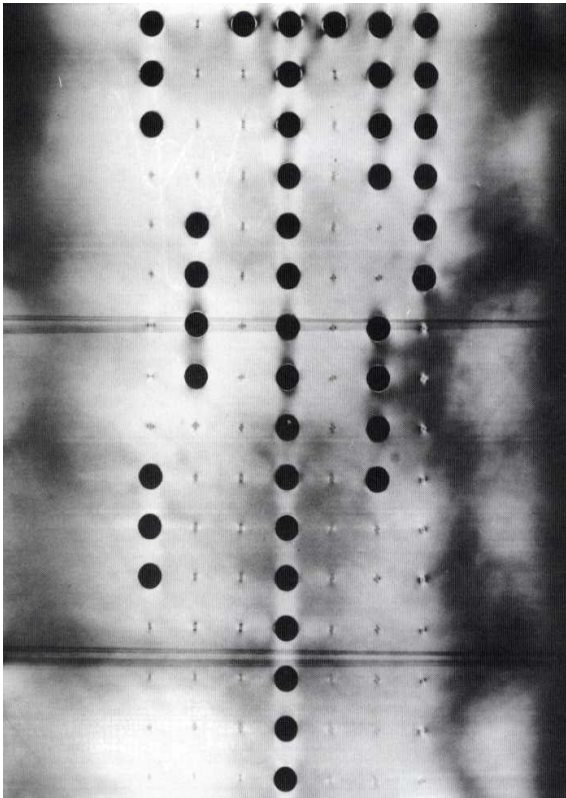
[Fig.11.] László
ALEXANDER:
FARBLICHTMUSIC
(1925-) Matthias HOLL :
Ein Farblichtkonzert von
Alexander László,
Breitkopf & Härtel,
Wiesbaden Leipzig



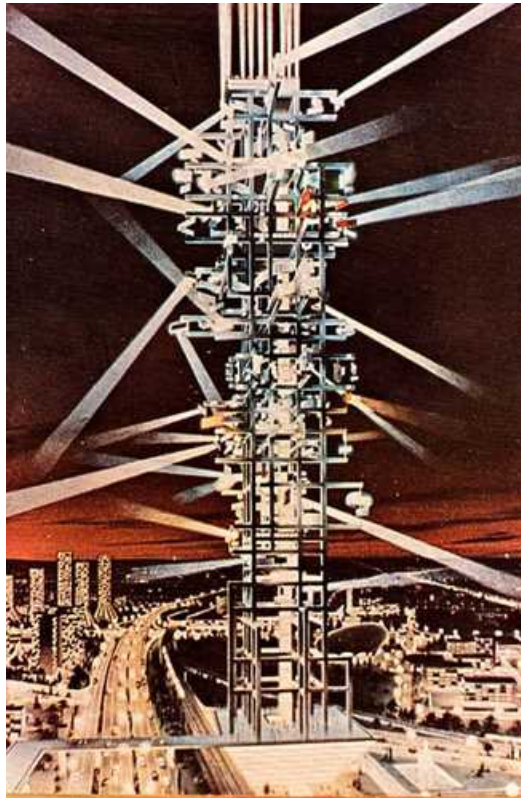
[Fig.12.] László MOHOLY-NAGY: LIGHT-SPACE-MODULÁTOR (1922-1930)
Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne Light Prop for an Electric Stage, Harvard Art
Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Gift of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy © Artists Rights Society
(ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



[Fig.13.] Attila CSÖRG : HEMISPHERE(1996) photo on paper 50,8x60,8 cm



[Fig.14.] György KEPES and William WAINWRIGHT: PHOTO-ELASTIC PAVEMENT (1968)



[Fig.15.] Nicholas SCHÖFFER: La Tour Lumière Cybernétique 1963 (plan)



[Fig.16.]
SZIGETI Gábor Csongor:
PULSE 2.0 (2013) video
installation, variable sizes



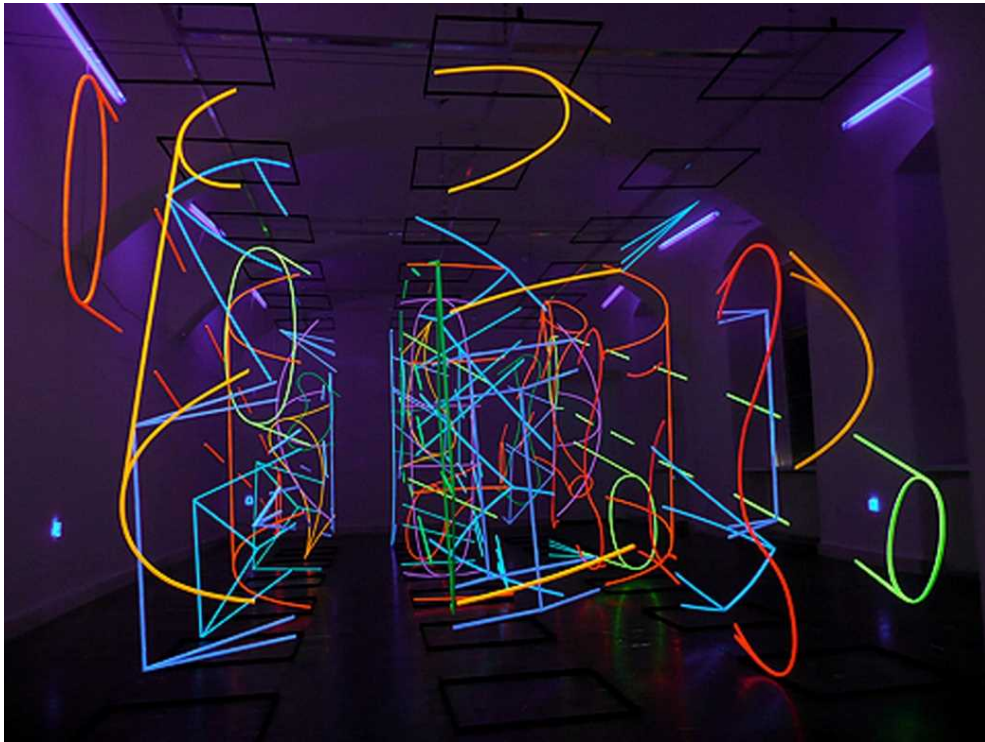
[Fig.17.] Attila CSÁJI:
RETURNING (2002) projected animation
Lux Europae, Kopenhagen



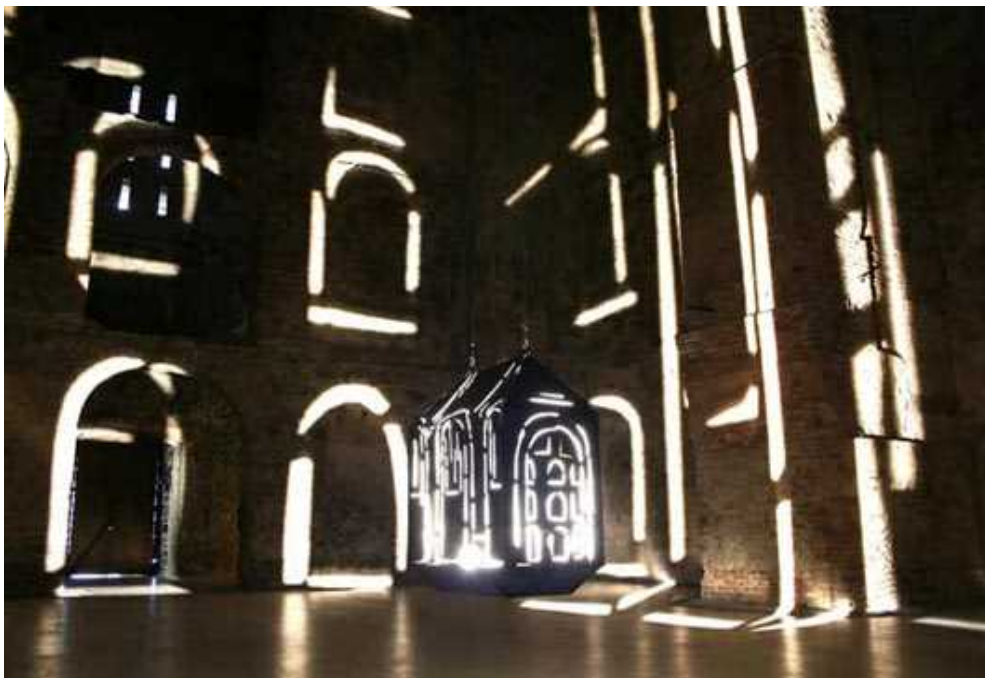
[Fig.18.] Bálint BOLYGÓ: SHM
Lissajous (2001-2006) iron, glass, light,
soot, various in size



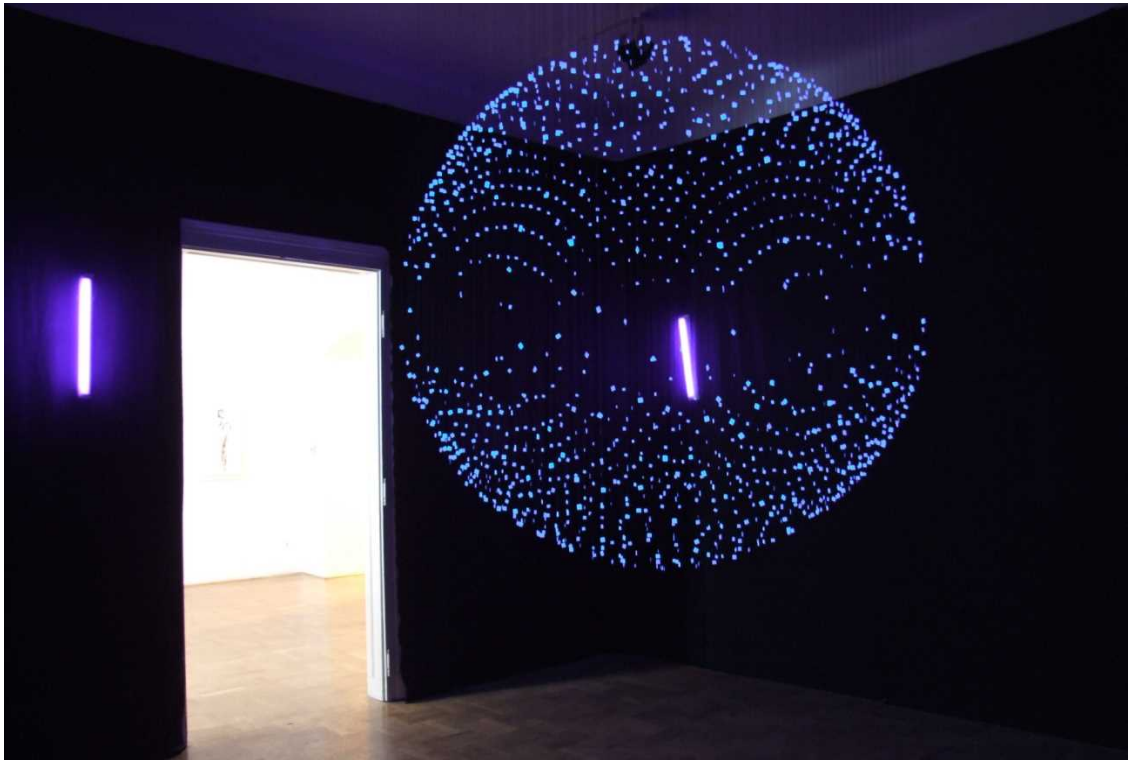
[Fig.19.] Lajos DARGAY:
LIGHT TOWER (1978)
glass, granit, sensors, iron, light
17 m. Eger (HU)



[Fig.20.] András MENGYÁN: POLYPHONIC VISUAL SPACE III. (2009)
660x300x250cm painted aluminium, UV light, various in size



[Fig.21.] Gyula VÁRNASI: One of the Few Moments I. (2006) site-specific
light installation (metal house, incandescent lamp, cables, steel wire,
transformer) Museum Kiscell Municipal



[Fig.22.] Erik MÁTRAI: ORB (2007) light installation, UV-light, paper d=180cm
neon, d=180cm