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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LIGHT

When Art Met Science

OSA celebrated IDL 2018 by co-sponsoring an immersive art exhibit.

Molly Moser

ARTECHOUSE, an art space with locations in Washington, D.C., and Albuquerque, N.M., USA, has a mission to inspire, educate and empower the creation of new, experiential and exploratory art—all enabled by science and technology. Thus, it was the perfect venue for a partnership celebrating the inaugural International Day of Light (IDL), which aimed to draw attention to the ubiquitous role that light plays in diverse areas of our daily lives.

Immersive experience

Presented by ARTECHOUSE in partnership with OSA, the American Physical Society (APS) and the American

Institute of Physics (AIP) Venture Partnership Fund, “Naked Eyes” was an immersive audiovisual experience by the world-renowned artist studio Nonotak. The four-installation exhibition premiered on 16 May, the International Day of Light, and was slated to end on 30 June. OPN was invited to a special preview of the exhibit and was able to pick the brains of the artists, gallery owners and society personnel who made the show possible.

Sandro Keresa, co-founder and creative director of the innovative space, focuses on technology-driven works to stimulate interest in the intersection between art and science. “As a society, we are moving more toward utilizing

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—Noemi Schipfer, Nonotak

technology in every aspect of what we do, so it is a natural connection to make between art and technology,” said Keresa. He underscored the importance of science for inspiring innovative, experiential art, emphasizing that through art and science, creativity is limitless.

Noemi Schipfer, an illustrator who’s one of Nonotak’s two members (along with Takami Nakamoto), explained that it is the “immateriality” of light that inspires her to create experiential, dreamlike light and sound installations. “Light is our main medium. It’s not just illumination; it’s also reflection or even projection, and we like to experiment with that.” Keresa, too, believes that light is an inspiring medium for art. He noted that light “has the natural quality of making the viewer feel immersed and enveloped in it,” and suggested that light’s versatility means that “the way it can be presented seems only limited by one’s imagination.”

Nonotak created an installation titled “Zero Point 1” that used many thin strands of Corning Fibrance Light-Diffusing Fiber and integrated technology solutions provided by Versalume. The installation is a 3-D grid-like structure, where individual strands lit up in coordination with ethereal music. The overall effect was complex and

geometric—overwhelming the viewer’s senses in a mesmerizing experience.

Fiber optics and LEDs

The fiber lasers were key to the success of this installation, as the quality of light is “seamless,” which “changed everything,” according to Schipfer. Frank Kuo, an OSA volunteer, explained that the fibers combine fiber optics and LED technology, which allowed Nonotak to create in this innovative way. “LED is easy to work with because you can change the intensity of the current; this gives the artist freedom to create and shape the space.” According to Kuo, “the fiber optic aspect of the technology makes the light sharp; it confines the light.”

Liz Rogan, OSA’s CEO, spoke to the significance of collaborating with ARTECHOUSE on the International Day of Light. “We hope to generate a level of curiosity in the technology and science that’s supported through sustained federal funding,” she said. “The technologies being used as media in the installation are the same technologies that support incredible discoveries that we depend on. For example, fiber optics continue to expand and support our communication needs, while LEDs provide energy-efficient lighting solutions throughout the world.” 

Molly Moser is OPN’s associate editor.



ARTECHOUSE & Augmented Reality

At ARTECHOUSE, even the cocktails are served with a dash of tech. Gallery attendees were invited to visit ARTECHOUSE’s Augmented Reality Bar to enjoy light-themed beverages at the IDL event, with names like Sunlight, Green Light, Ocean Light, Twilight and Firelight. Lined up side by side, the drinks represented a colorful spectrum of visible light. Each drink was served on a special app-activated coaster featuring the ARTECHOUSE logo—when visitors scanned the logo with the ARTECHOUSE app, they were rewarded with an AR display on their phone screens.

Download the ARTECHOUSE app from iTunes or Google and scan the ARTECHOUSE logo above for an AR experience and to learn more about current exhibitions.



Images (clockwise from top left): (1) Noemi Schipfer of Nonotak. (2) An attendee views Zero Point 1. (3) Ocean, the largest installation, featured lights across the floor as well as projected light. (4) An installation comprising synchronized, spinning fixtures.