

Lighting up the planet

Free light-art festival Fjord Oslo announces eight installations for 2020 edition, including four world premieres



Fjord Oslo 2020 will feature new commissions and major artworks, such as Luke Jerram's Gaia which has travelled worldwide. Photo by Michael Jones at Bluedot in 2018.

6–8 November

According to a growing number of geologists, ecologists and climate scientists, we have entered the Anthropocene – an epoch in the planet's history where human activity will leave a permanent signature on the Earth, fundamentally changing the systems upon which all life depends. From climate change to Covid-19, the manifestations of humanity's influence are becoming impossible to ignore.

But what is the nature of that impact? What will our shared future be? Do we have the power to ensure it is positive? Is there still space for hope?

Next month, eight international artists will present their responses to questions such as these on Oslo's Harbour Promenade for the second annual edition of Fjord Oslo – Norway's free festival dedicated to light art. Selected by festival co-founder Anastasia Isachsen, the installations include four world premieres (two more than shown at the inaugural festival in 2019) with contributions from The Netherlands, France, Spain, Taiwan, Norway and the UK, and all use light as a medium to ask questions about and shift perspectives on our relationship with the Earth.

'The idea of the Anthropocene asks hard questions of us. It requires that we imagine our common future beyond a human lifetime or generation. As the notion of a time beyond ours becomes more challenging to predict in a rapidly changing world, the need grows for new reflections and narratives that might help us understand and define our common future. What this future will be depends on us now more than ever. This responsibility does not lead only to dystopian scenarios, but also to positive and creative ideas and changes. In this way, the idea of a new era, the Anthropocene, opens up possibilities for new ideas, new images and new perspectives.'

– Anastasia Isachsen, co-founder and artistic director, Fjord Oslo

Illuminated from 6pm to 11pm each day, the installations will be positioned at different locations along Oslo's Harbour Promenade, turning the whole area from Oslo City Hall to Aker Brygge into an open-air gallery – a naturally Covid-safe collective art experience for the city's residents and visitors.

2020 artworks



Inspired by art, design and technology, Tre by Void (Norway) is a minimalist light and sound installation.

PREMIERE: Tre by Void (Norway)

Multidisciplinary Oslo design studio Void operates in the gap between the real and virtual, drawing on elements of design, architecture, art and technology. For Fjord Oslo 2020, they unveil the minimalist light/sound installation, Tre, which plays on the word's twin Norwegian meanings: tree and three. Tre takes the tree as an example of how the human mind often resorts to simple object categorisation and overlooks the complexity of the interconnected systems and processes that nurture the natural world. By emphasising such systems – and our own interaction with them, Tre creates a collective experience celebrating the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature.



Transnature by Hotaru Visual Guerrilla (Spain) uses projection mapping for an organic, audiovisual experience.

PREMIERE: Transnature by Hotaru Visual Guerrilla (Spain)

Spanish digital studio Hotaru Visual Guerrilla uses projection-mapping technology to create extraordinary audiovisual experiences. Mapped onto the façade of the Nobel Peace Centre, Transnature fuses organic forms, geometry, lighting and sound to create an alternative reality in which artificial nature and human architecture are combined to create startling futuristic forms. The artwork extends the ideas of transhumanism – the belief that technology can transform and elevate the human condition – to the natural world, examining what new realities we might create through the manipulation of nature.



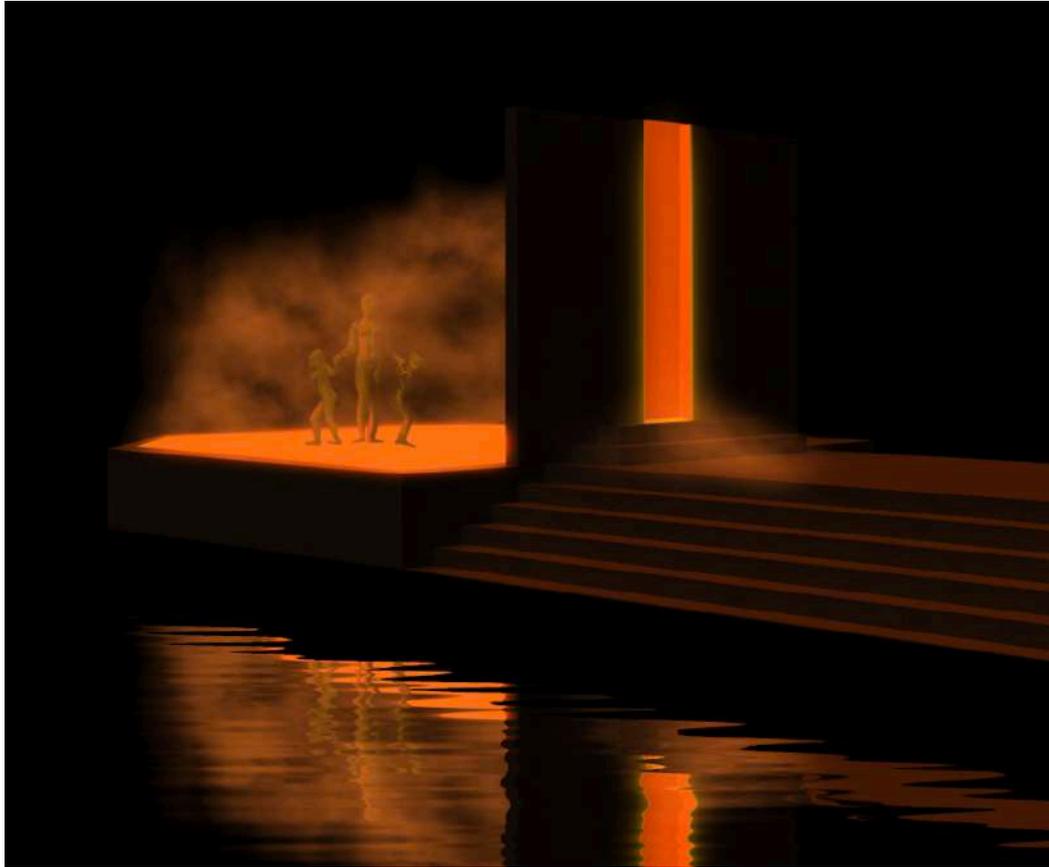
The festival's co-founder debuts *Monad*, a vast-scale video projection taking a visual journey through symbols.

PREMIERE: *Monad* by Anastasia Isachsen (Norway)

Norwegian light artists and Festival co-creator Anastasia Isachsen is a mediation on the meaning of the circle – what Pythagoras dubbed ‘the monad’ – throughout human history. Comprising a vast-scale video projection onto a screen of water and an accompanying soundscape, *Monad* is a visual journey through multiple circular symbols – the halo, the zero, the iris of the eye, an embodiment of the cycle of time, the rhythm of the universe – that is designed to invoke inspiration and wonder in the audience, the promise of a new beginning.

*‘For me, *Monad* has become a very relevant piece for our times, yet it speaks of eternity. It is a very personal piece that helps me to find meaning and hope in current chaos. I hope it does the same for others too.’*

– Anastasia Isachsen, co-founder and artistic director, Fjord Oslo



Silje Thorsager Østby and Robert Iversen Bogard return to Fjord Oslo in collaboration with Signify.

PREMIERE: Silje Thorsager Østby and Robert Iversen Bogard with Signify (Norway)

Having created one of the most extraordinary installations of Fjord Also 2019 – Light3ence, which artificially recreated the spectacular solar phenomenon of the 'Brockenspectre', Silje Thorsager Østby returns to the festival in collaboration with architect Robert Iversen Bogard. For 2020, their newly commissioned site-specific installation by Signify uses light to continue their interest in immersive spatial experiences and philosophical ideals. Further details to come.



Luke Jerram aims to create the 'Overview Effect' – the awe astronauts feel when looking at the Earth.

Gaia by Luke Jerram (UK)

Named for the personification of the Earth in Greek mythology, Gaia is a rotating sphere, seven metres in diameter, depicting the planet's surface using 120dpi NASA imagery. It is intended to evoke in its audience something akin to the 'Overview Effect' – the feeling of awe and the intuitive understanding of the interconnectedness of life that astronauts experience looking back at the planet from space. In the wake of the pandemic, it serves as a reminder that human societies are interdependent, and that we have a responsibility to look after each other, and the wonders of nature that surround us.

'I hope visitors to Gaia get to see the Earth as if from space; an incredibly beautiful and precious place. An ecosystem we urgently need to look after – our only home.'

– Luke Jerram, artist



Inspired by the Greek 'Daughter of Chaos', Nyx is a robot that slowly writes light-emitting poetry in the city.

Nyx by Gijs van Bon (Netherlands)

Daughter of Chaos, Greek goddess of the night, Nyx leads the world through the darkness. In Gijs van Bon's installation, Nyx is a robot that slowly writes light-emitting poetry on the dark streets of the city. Letter by letter, the robot creates words from a combination of photoluminescence powder and fine sand, which glow beneath the ultraviolet light.



Elsa Tomkowiak wants visitors to look again at Oslo's most recognisable landscape; the harbour vista.

Out/Elodie by Elsa Tomkowiak (France)

Elsa Tomkowiak's installation obliges people to look again at one of Oslo's most recognisable landscapes, injecting a note of playful surreality to the harbour vista. Streaked with rainbow colour, five giant glowing orbs float on the surface of the water, a startling intervention that encourages the viewer to reassess their relationship with the environment by invoking the idea of planets and biological cells.



Acorn Studio introduce a slow paced serenity to the festival with Luna.

Luna by Acorn Studio (Taiwan)

Taipei-based design studio Acorn sets out to transform spaces by introducing a touch of slow-paced serenity. A wonderful companion piece to Gaia, Luna is a simple, hyperrealistic moon lamp installed in the basket of a bicycle. A beautifully pure expression of wonder, and a reminder to take time to observe your surroundings and pursue your dreams.

Shared experience in a socially distanced world

One of the principle aims of Fjord Oslo is to create a free collective experience of art for residents of and visitors – a challenge in a world where proximity to others can be hazardous. Fortunately, as all installations are located outdoors, widely spaced and freely available to view at any time between 6pm and 11pm, the festival is one of few large-scale cultural events that can take place safely, in full compliance with social-distancing measures. As such, it also has a small but significant role to play in supporting the pandemic-endangered creative sector, being one of the only art festivals able to commission new work from artists and support their livelihoods.

'We felt a real sense of responsibility to support artists and audiences however we could. Commissioning new installations is a tangible way to help artists, and will hopefully bring some light into people's lives.'

– Anastasia Isachsen, co-founder and artistic director, Fjord Oslo

The festival team have also set out to address the impact of Covid-19 from a psychological perspective as well as a practical one, by including colourful works that help cultivate a sense of much-needed optimism, as well as two works (Gaia by Luke Jerram and Out/Elodie by Elsa Tomkowiak) that can be enjoyed in daylight as well as darkness.

Fjord Oslo returns to Harbour Promenade, Oslo on Friday 6 November for three nights. All exhibits are free to view.



Notes to editors

For more information, images and interviews with Fjord Oslo's founder and artistic director Anastasia Isachsen, please contact sabine@zetteler.co.uk.

About Fjord Oslo

Fjord Oslo is a free contemporary art festival that transforms the Norwegian capital's cultural quarter into a vast outdoor exhibition, open to all. Bringing together an international programme of renowned artists, this annual celebration offers a visually spectacular and conceptually wide-ranging exploration of light-based art. By taking art onto the streets for three nights, Fjord Oslo invites the entire city to come together and share a powerful and inclusive experience of art and light. The second edition takes place on 6–8 November 2020, along Harbour Promenade in Oslo.

fjordoslo.com

[instagram.com/fjordoslo](https://www.instagram.com/fjordoslo)

[facebook.com/fjordoslofestival](https://www.facebook.com/fjordoslofestival)

twitter.com/fjordoslo