

Press release
16th September 2021

The Neon Award supports the emerging generation of Czech artists working in light and digital art. The jury of the Signal Festival selected the artwork of students from the Technical University of Liberec

Signal Festival has long supported the youngest generation of Czech visual artists and author collectives. During its existence it has helped to create more than 80 installations. This year, the festival has a new addition to its mission. For the first time, together with the company Pražská plynárenská, it has prepared the Neon Award competition for students of art colleges. The winner of the challenge was the work *Simulacra* by the artist duo Vítězslav Plavec and Filip Zeman from the Faculty of Architecture and Arts of the Technical University of Liberec. The installation, which will be on display on the streets of Prague at the ninth edition of the festival from 14th to 17th October, plays with optical illusion and image distortion. It uses technologies known, for example, from the production of 3D posters.

"Visual art with the medium of light is on the rise in the Czech Republic. We have several prominent personalities here and a growing number of young artists who are beginning to take up this discipline and are increasingly working with modern technologies in a very skilful way. The Neon Prize financially supports young artists who would otherwise find it difficult to finance their artistic endeavours," explains **Martin Pošta**, director of the Signal Festival.

The aim of the Neon Prize is to support innovative artistic projects focused on contemporary digital technologies, animation, motion design or 3D animation. Students of Czech art universities could send their applications until 30th August 2021. The winner was selected in early September by a jury consisting of David Kořínek (head of the Centre for Audio Visual Studies at FAMU), Richard Loskot (visual artist), Barbora Půlpánová (member of the board of the Smečky Gallery Foundation run by Pražská plynárenská), Ondřej Horák (artist and author of exhibition projects), Jakub Pešek (light designer, visual artist, scenographer and founder of the Lunchmeat Festival) and Mario Kunovský (programme coordinator of the Signal Festival). In total, students from 6 Czech universities, namely AVU, FUD UJEP, FAMU, DAMU, Technical University in Liberec and VŠUP participated in the competition. The following fields were represented: art in public space, applied advertising photography, industrial design, painting, time-based media, interactive media, as well as painting and directing and dramaturgy of alternative and puppet theatre.

The winner was the artwork *Simulacra*. Its authors are 4th year students of the Fine Arts - Creation in Public Space programme at the Faculty of Art and Architecture at the Technical University of Liberec, Vítězslav Plavec and Filip Zeman. The installation tries to fit into the collage-like or cool urban architecture. At first glance, the objects can be perceived as part of the urban furniture. However, once one looks closely, it becomes obvious that they do not fulfil any clear function and only play with visual illusion. The work is made up of square formats of lenticular lenses that are set in a rectangular assembly of metal frames. It is the lenses that create the distortion of the images, and due to the refraction of light, the visitor sees only a certain part of them from each angle of view.

The jury particularly appreciated the complexity of the project, its technical demands and interactivity. Depending on the changing environment, it creates different situations and can be easily exhibited in different spaces, under different conditions.

"*Simulacra represent the confusion of the individual in contemporary society full of intense and accelerated sensory perceptions. We see our own reflection against the background of a distorting world,*" explain the authors **Filip Zeman and Vítězslav Plavec**.

Signal Festival is one of the largest producers of contemporary visual art. Since 2017, it has held an open call and provided young artists with financial support, technological facilities for the creation of artworks and the opportunity to exhibit them to the general public during the autumn festival, which, with its attendance of over 500,000 people, is one of the largest Czech cultural events taking place in public space. In the past, works by Kateřina Blahutová, Adam Cigler and Petr Vacek, Jana Mercogliano alias Verge, Tomáš Dymeš, Ivo Louda, Tomáš Ullrich, or the *_STROY* or *Blok_4* collectives have been created in this way.

"*It was the collage-like nature and modularity of the work that appealed to me the most, partly because it will then be included in the collection of Pražská plynárenská, which focuses on collage. We want to put this collection of greats such as Jiří Kolář or Jindřich Štýrský in the context of contemporary art, for example in our premises of the Smečky Gallery,*" said **Barbora Půlpánová**, a jury representative and member of the board of the Smečky Gallery Foundation.

About Signal Festival:

Signal is a festival of digital and creative culture. It combines contemporary visual art, urban space and modern technologies. It has become the most visited cultural event in the Czech Republic. The programme is composed of renowned international and Czech artists from the fields of light design, visual and digital art, artificial intelligence and conceptual art. The festival likes to educate itself and its visitors. It combines the historical backdrop of beloved Prague with the latest technologies and contemporary social issues. Signal Festival is one of the largest producers of contemporary art in the country. It supports the youngest Czech artists and has been behind the creation of more than seventy original installations created especially for the festival. It organises accompanying programmes for children, professionals and students. It cooperates with a number of foreign festivals and cultural institutions.

The ninth edition of the festival will take place from 14th to 17th October 2021.
Every day from 7 pm to 12 pm

For more information visit www.signalfestival.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/SignalFestival
Instagram: www.instagram.com/signalfestival/

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