

LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Haroon Mirza *For A Dyson Sphere*

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508 West 24th Street, New York

“There are so many contradictions to the technological pursuit of sustainable energy. The irony of the Dyson Sphere is that if we want to advance as a civilization to the point where we could truly harness the power of the sun, we would end up blocking out our own natural light and heat, consuming much of our natural resources and have to start colonizing other planets in the process.”

Haroon Mirza is known for creating self-powering and autonomous works of art, employing electrical signals, sound, photovoltaic panels and complex circuitry or systems of exchange that result in dynamic, audio-visual events. For his latest major project, *Dyson Sphere*, which will premiere in UTOPIA, the 6th edition of lille3000, Mirza experiments with the notion that humans might one day be able to encompass a star with a swarm of electric panels in order to exploit and gather its enormous reserves of solar power. In his exhibition at Lisson New York, *For a Dyson Sphere*, an iteration of this hypothesis, Mirza researches concepts of sustainability, viability and ecology at its core, for the survival of the human race. The London-based artist's second solo exhibition in New York features a proposal to surround our sun with an orbital, energy-capture device that first appeared in a little-known British science fiction novel by Olaf Stapledon in 1937, entitled *Starmaker*. The proposition was popularized and given its name by English-American physicist Freeman Dyson in 1960.

Haroon Mirza's earthbound version of this hypothetical megastructure inhabits Lisson Gallery New York, centred on a blindingly brilliant tungsten light, encased within a carapace of photovoltaic panels. With each rotation of the bright bulbs, Mirza is giving light to this new technological dawn and through a series of cables the wattage produced flows around the space, powering a symphonic ecosystem created by the artist.

Through the planning of this exhibition Mirza explored the contradictions in the technological pursuit of sustainable energy. The question of whether such a radical proposal as the *Dyson Sphere* would ever be truly ecologically viable – even if colonizing and mining other planets could be avoided – is put into question by the paradoxical reality of attempting to envelop and harvest the life-giving energy of an extra-terrestrial body, before reserving and limiting our increasingly finite local resources.

Mirza first used solar panels for an ambitious installation throughout Le Corbusier's famous Villa Savoye in Paris, titled *Light Hours* in 2014. They were initially used to circumvent the lack of power he encountered in the carefully conserved interiors. As was the case in *Light Hours*, a galaxy of subsidiary works in *For A Dyson Sphere* surround and receive sustenance from the central power source, their individual LEDs flickering into life or sonic bursts resonating as the light strikes each corresponding solar panel. The other energy-hungry ecosystems in this mini planetarium incorporate plant life – including species of hallucinogenic succulents and fungi, disconnected from their mycological network in the outside work – again exploring whether any attempts to power our inexorable progress will ultimately be to the benefit or detriment of the natural world.

Haroon Mirza's ambitious installation *Dyson Sphere* for lille3000 opens 14 May to 2 October 2022 in Gare Saint Sauveur, Lille and is proudly supported by Maison Ruinart.

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About the artist

Haroon Mirza has won international acclaim for installations that test the interplay and friction between sound and light waves and electric current. He devises sculptures, performances and immersive installations, such as *The National Apavillion of Then and Now* (2011) – an anechoic chamber with a circle of light that grows brighter in response to increasing drone, and completely dark when there is silence. An advocate of interference (in the sense of electro-acoustic or radio disruption), he creates situations that purposefully cross wires. He describes his role as a composer, manipulating electricity, a live, invisible and volatile phenomenon, to make it dance to a different tune and calling on instruments as varied as household electronics, vinyl and turntables, LEDs, furniture, video footage and existing artworks to behave differently. Processes are left exposed and sounds occupy space in an unruly way, testing codes of conduct and charging the atmosphere. Mirza asks us to reconsider the perceptual distinctions between noise, sound and music, and draws into question the categorization of cultural forms. "All music is organized sound or organized noise," he says. "So as long as you're organizing acoustic material, it's just the perception and the context that defines it as music or noise or sound or just a nuisance" (2013).

Haroon Mirza was born in 1977 in London where he lives and works. He has a BA in Painting from Winchester School of Art, an MA in Design Critical Practice and Theory from Goldsmiths College (2006) and an MA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art and Design (2007). Recent solo exhibitions have been held at CCA Kitakyushu, Kitakyushu, Japan (2020); John Hansard Gallery, Southampton, UK (2019); Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia (2019); Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China (2019); Ikon, Birmingham, UK (2018); Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA, USA (2018); Nikolaj Kunsthal, Copenhagen, Denmark (2018); Zabłudowicz Collection, London, UK (2017); LiFE, Saint-Nazaire, France (2017); Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC, Canada (2017); Summerhall, Edinburgh, UK (2016); Pivô, São Paulo, Brazil (2016); Nam June Paik Center, Seoul, South Korea (2015); Matadero, Madrid, Spain (2015); Museum Tinguely, Basel, Switzerland (2015); Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Switzerland (2014); Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, Poissy, France (2014); IMMA, Dublin, Ireland (2014); Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire, France (2014); The Hepworth, Wakefield, UK (2013); MIMA, Middlesbrough, UK (2013); The New Museum, New York, NY, USA (2012); Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St Gallen, Switzerland (2012); University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, USA (2012); Camden Arts Centre, London, UK (2011) and A-Foundation, Liverpool, UK (2009). His work was included in the 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale, China (2012) and the 54th Venice Biennale, Italy (2011), where he was awarded the Silver Lion. He was awarded the Northern Art Prize in 2011, the DAIWA Foundation Art Prize in 2012, the Zurich Art Prize in 2013, the Nam June Paik Art Center Prize in 2014, the Calder Art Prize in 2015 and the COLLIDE International Award in 2017 which has given place to a two-month residency at CERN, Switzerland in the course of 2018. In the spring this same year, Haroon Mirza unveiled 'Stone Circle', a large-scale outdoor sculpture commissioned by Ballroom Marfa, Texas, which will remain in the landscape for five years. In 2021, Mirza's *The National Apavillion of Then and Now* (2011) was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, two in New York and one in Shanghai. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer.

In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

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