

Zach Blas: 'Cultus'

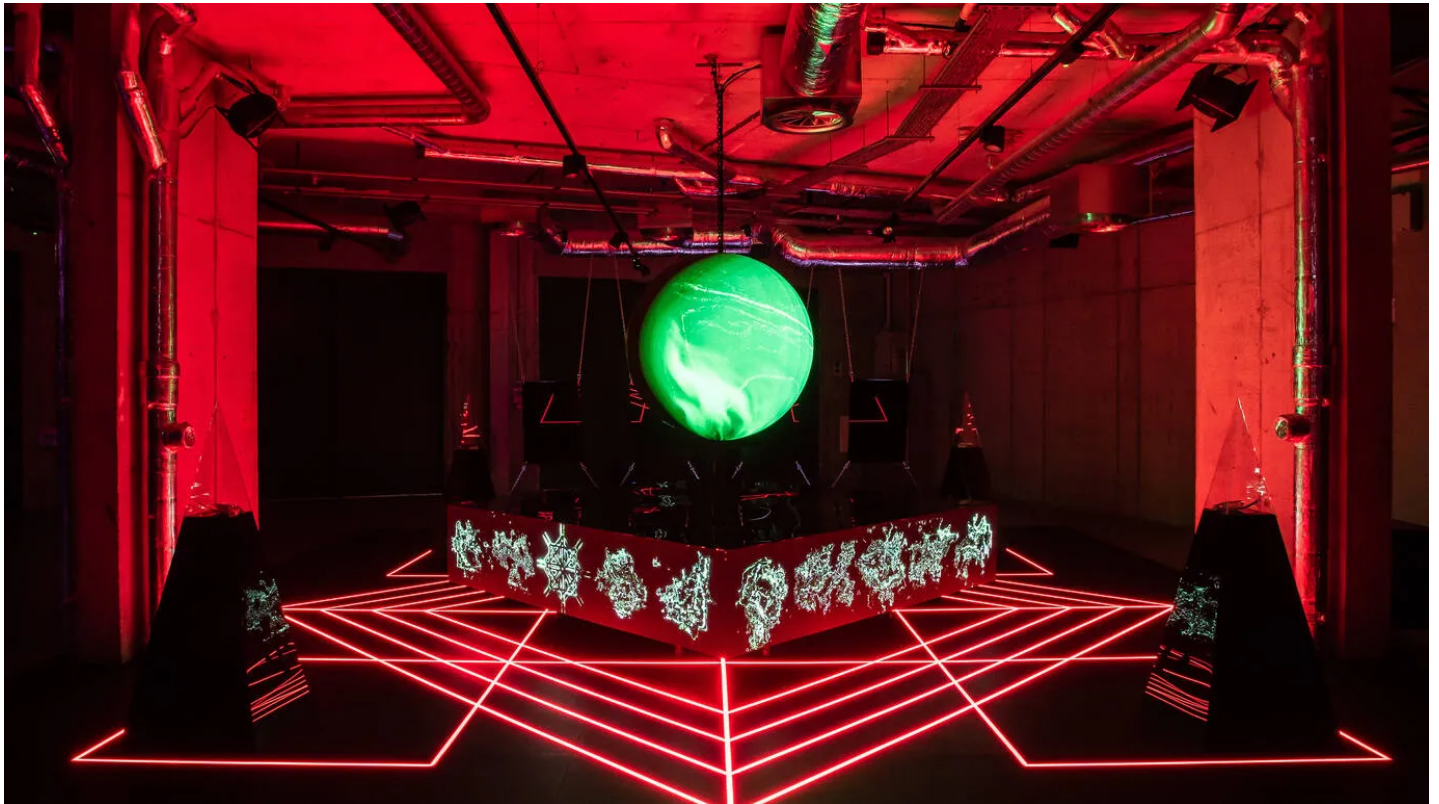
Art

arebyte Gallery, Poplar

Until 17 Feb 2024



Recommended



Zach Blas_CULTUS- 2023 photo credit Max Colson

Time Out says



We might just be designing our own doom. With the pursuit of AI, the creation of ultra-powerful machine intelligences, we're engaging in the kind of uniquely human and hubristic act that just might spell the demise of the species. And American artist Zach Blas knows that when the world starts ending, we pray.

That apocalypse isn't just sci-fi speculation and fearmongering either, it's a legitimate concern of the tech innovators at the heart of AI research. They speak about AI like an imminent, unstoppable messianic arrival that must be bowed down to. It's that quasi-religiosity that's at the core of Blas's 'Cultus', a throbbingly loud, heady, shadowy installation that imagines AI beings as future gods.

'Cultus' itself is meant to be a 'god generator', creating AI idols for viewers to worship. In the middle of the space, surrounded by offerings on pyramidal plinths, a pulsating green orb dances with lights. Its undulating surface becomes a series of masked, alien, terrifying faces intoning big, scary religious sermons. These are the four AI gods: Expositio, Iudicium, Lacrimae and Eternus. Four panels hang on chains describing prayers to each god, obscure swirling symbols cover a dais, techno pop chants echo through the dark space. This is the Mithraeum of the future, a temple to new deities borne of some twisted reverse-creation myth.

The whole thing is kind of like the set of a BDSM episode of Red Dwarf, and it's visually super impressive. But its future gothic techno immersiveness hides a clever heart. The show feels like a very ancient warning against worshipping false idols, against how we blindly kowtow to Silicon Valley occultism. But it's probably too late, the gods are already here, already being praised, we just haven't put on our black robes yet.



Written by [Eddy Frankel](#) Tuesday 24 October 2023



Details

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