

SCIENCE

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STORIES

COMMUNITY

FORGING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY: ARTISTS CONTRIBUTING ACROSS THE NETWORK

Science Gallery's international network has resulted in an ever-growing community of artists exhibiting in multiple seasons and galleries

WHO?

- ▶ Anna Dumitriu
- ▶ Julijonas Urbonas
- ▶ Science Gallery Bengaluru
- ▶ Science Gallery Detroit
- ▶ Science Gallery Dublin
- ▶ Science Gallery Melbourne
- ▶ Science Gallery London

WHAT?

Through art commissions, exhibition open calls and residency programmes, Science Gallery supports artists from all creative disciplines to create new works and further develop existing projects to participate in the galleries' seasons. The international network allows these inspiring and thought-provoking exhibits, installations and performances to reach and engage with global audiences across the eight galleries. This ever-growing community of contributors has resulted in artists exhibiting in multiple seasons and various galleries in the network.

Brighton-based visual artist Anna Dumitriu holds the exhibiting record, having contributed to seven exhibitions across different locations. Dumitriu's journey with Science Gallery started in 2009 when Dublin commissioned her for their season *INFECTIOUS*. Her transdisciplinary art project *Cybernetic Bacteria 2.0* investigated the relationship between bacterial communication and our own digital communications networks. Three years later, Dumitriu was again commissioned by the team in Dublin for their exhibition *HUMAN+*. Developed in collaboration with scientists from the University of Hertfordshire, the installation *My Robot Companion* comprises an interactive robot prototype accompanied by a series of speculative robot heads, aiming to provoke viewers to reflect on the appearance of future robot carers. Science Gallery's spaces create unique environments for researchers to engage diverse audiences with their work, as in the case of Dumitriu's collaborators. During the exhibition, they gathered visitors' thoughts on how robot companions should look, move and behave in the future, which became the most extensive data set on public opinions of robot appearance at the time.

A typical Science Gallery exhibition has an overarching intersectional theme allowing for freedom to explore various sub-themes within the show. This distinctive approach enables artists working on a variety of topics and mediums like Dumitriu to explore multiple themes and methodologies within their practice, as well as to reach a wide range of audiences. Her participations include London's pre-opening season *MOUTHY* with her hands-on workshop *Microbe Mouth*, Dublin's exhibitions *HUMANS NOT NEED TO APPLY* and *IN CASE OF EMERGENCY* with her *Antisocial Swarm Robots* and with her cosy embroidered *Antibiotic Resistance Quilts*. Bengaluru's season *SUBMERGE* featured her underwater installation *ArchaeaBot*.



Anna Dumitriu, *My Robot Companion*. Installation view at Science Gallery Dublin's *HUMAN+* exhibition, 2011

Science Gallery's commissions often become the seed of projects that end up expanding beyond their original scope. In 2018, Detroit commissioned Dumitriu for their season [HUSTLE](#) to create [Hypersymbiotics](#), an installation of speculative medications exploring the intertwined history of medicine and advertising. The development of this work and the exposure it gained through the exhibition allowed Dumitriu to grow [Hypersymbiotics](#) at a much larger scale, in collaboration with the Danish museum Medical Museion.

Another example of a multiple-exhibiting contributor is Lithuanian artist and designer Julijonas Urbonas. In 2011, Urbonas's installation [Euthanasia Coaster](#) was selected through an international open call to be part of Dublin's HUMAN+. The speculative work is a hypothetical death machine in the form of a roller coaster, engineered to humanely – with elegance and euphoria – take the life of a human being.

Back at the time, Urbonas had the opportunity to attend the exhibition opening and engaged with mediators and visitors. The artist received fascinating feedback, ranging from technical advice to apocalyptic speculations. But the audience reach of [Euthanasia Coaster](#) exploded exponentially online with a video on Dublin's YouTube channel where Urbonas introduced his work. In weeks, the artist experienced a rapid increase in visitor numbers to his website, mainly to the coaster's page. This exposure led him to give online, radio, and TV interviews for months. Since then, more than 5M visitors have visited the [Euthanasia Coaster's](#) website, the video hit over 700K across platforms, and more than 2M people have visited the Wikipedia article. In 2022, [Euthanasia Coaster](#) will feature in Melbourne's season SWARM.

In 2018, Dublin brought Urbonas in again with their season [LIFE AT THE EDGES](#). The artist was commissioned to develop [A Planet of People](#), an artistic and scientific feasibility study of an artificial planet made entirely from human bodies. In the exhibition space, the body of the visitors was scanned and transposed into the 3D astrophysics simulation. As in Dumitriu's case, Urbonas further developed this work to represent Lithuania at the 2021 Venice Biennale of Architecture.

Dumitriu and Urbonas are not alone. There are countless examples of artists that have long-lasting collaborative relationships with SG where ideas have developed into renowned works, including Zack Denfeld and Cat Kramer, Matt Kenyon, Rachel Hanlon, Robert Good, Andy Holden, Agnieszka Kurant, among many others.



Anna Dumitriu, [ArchaeaBot](#). Installation at Science Gallery Bengaluru's exhibition, 2019



Julijonas Urbonas, [Euthanasia Coaster](#). Installation view at Science Gallery Dublin's HUMAN+ exhibition, 2011

WHAT THEY SAID?

'The Science Gallery Network has been very supportive of my work and enabled me to do many exciting projects. The themes and seasons are always really fascinating and inspiring, aligning very closely with many of the subjects I am thinking about. In the early days of Science Gallery, it was a one-off example. However, it has been very influential over the years, and many galleries and museums are becoming interested and confident in developing exhibitions across art and science in similar ways. I think the Science Gallery Network has been very beneficial to the sector and shows how groundbreaking its model was.'

– Anna Dumitriu, artist

'I would highlight the gallery's capacity to engage the public and to initiate the dialogue not only between arts, science and technologies but also with the society. Although I was always considering some level of engagement in my exhibitions, after the exhibition HUMAN+, I started to pay more attention to it and feel its importance.'

– Julijonas Urbonas, artist

WHAT WERE THE BENEFITS AND IMPACTS?

- ▶ Growth of an internationally connected creative platform
- ▶ Public engagement
- ▶ Inspiring creativity
- ▶ Interdisciplinary collaboration



Anna Dumitriu's Microbe Mouth workshop at Science Gallery London, 2017



Two visitors experiencing Julijonas Urbonas' installation *Planet of People* during the launch of LIFE AT THE EDGES in 2018

LINKS

Learn more about the Science Gallery Network

<https://sciencegallery.org/about-network>

Compiled by: Ana Prendes and Katrina Enros, Science Gallery International 2022