



Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston  
713-743-9521  
blafferartmuseum.org  
[infoblaffer@uh.edu](mailto:infoblaffer@uh.edu)

***Gabriel Lester: Odeon***  
May 17, 2024—August 18, 2024

**Public Opening Reception | May 17, 6pm-8pm at the Blaffer Art Museum**

HOUSTON, TX | April 4, 2024

The Blaffer Art Museum is proud to present [\*Gabriel Lester: Odeon\*](#) the first solo museum exhibition in the United States of preeminent European artist Gabriel Lester, who has gained an international standing for his art, performance, and film as well as his dynamic public art installations. Across the span of his decades-long career, Lester has developed a cinematic lens through which to see and imagine the world. For this exhibition, Lester is most interested in the interplay between light and shadow, as well as the seen and unseen, as he responds to Houston, its fossil fuel industry and the incubation of NASA as defining elements of the region. Through a series of experiential installations and kinetic sculptures, this exhibition pierces heavy, weighted geometries with the delightful, if perplexing magic of discovery.

In the main installation *StarStruck*, a dark pool of oil is continually interrupted by droplets of water and corresponding flares of brilliant light – piercing a thick chamber of shadow with illuminating transmission. For the artist this sequence could be interpreted in many ways, yet two viewpoints remain prominent, if contrasting: as sparks or distant stars, or conversely, a nighttime bombing or erupting volcano. This heightened, if elusive state is further advanced in the neighboring light sculpture *Cosmic Call*, where the artist chases amorphous scenes of the universe through effervescent, yet ultra low-resolution LEDs. In so doing, Lester is trying to communicate the idea that the low-resolution imagery is philosophically (and conceptually) equal to our very modest, and ultimately minimal understanding of the universe.

The ability for light to simultaneously lead and lose us is expanded in the charmingly immersive installation *Alarm in the Universe* (a *How to Act* franchise). Within this environment, flickering colors surround the viewer – pulsing to the soundtracks of various Sci-fi films and television shows. The result is a sensation simultaneously familiar and uncanny, evoking the abstract language of televisual entertainment while also remaining strange and disorienting. Early modes of cinema flash before our eyes in the adjacent series *Jump Cut*, where methodically rotating cubes house a variety of dancing figures, like images of a dream. The figures rhythmically appear, disappear, then reappear. Persistence of vision and retinal residue accumulates here, propelling the art to work as much before your eyes, as within them.

The final installation, *Hungry Ghost*, marries optical with environmental effect as rays of sunshine pierce through a solitary perforated tower (it is made of stainless steel and powder coated in black). Located on the Museum’s front plaza, this work projects floating holographic cubes that speak to the fleetingness of so-called “structure.”

## About the Artist

**Gabriel Lester** (b. 1972) is an inventor. His works consist of installations, sculptures, performances, and films. Other activities include commissioned art in public space, physical structures, and design.

Lester’s creations originate from a desire to tell stories and establish contexts and settings that support these stories or propose their own narrative interpretation. His vocabulary is characterized as cinematographic, without necessarily employing film or video as a medium. However, like moviemaking, Lester’s practice has come to embrace and utilize all imaginable media and talent. Open ended, unresolved, seeking to keep mysteries alive and without explicit messages or singular ideas, his works propose ways to relate to the world, how it is (re-) presented and what mechanisms constitute our perception and understanding of it. With emphasis on human existence and experience, Lester’s projects aim to sharpen and flex the mind.

This exhibition is organized by former Jane Dale Owen Director and Chief Curator, Steven Matijcio and runs until August 11, 2024. Major funding for Gabriel Lester: *Odeon* is provided by the John R. Eckel Jr. Foundation, the John P. McGovern Foundation, and the Stolbun Family Foundation. Generous support is provided by the Blaffer Art Museum Advisory Board members and the Ryan Lee Gallery. This program is supported as part of the Dutch Culture USA program by the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York.

The following donors sustain Blaffer Art Museum in perpetuity by giving through endowments: Cecil Amelia Blaffer von Furstenberg Endowment for Exhibitions and Programs, Jane Dale Owen Endowment in the Blaffer Art Museum, Jo and Jim Furr Exhibition Endowment in the Blaffer Art Museum, Sarah C. Morian Endowment, and the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation Blaffer Gallery Endowment.

