

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

PRESS RELEASE

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and Jenny Holzer present a work of augmented reality that joins the museum's collection

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao announces *LIKE BEAUTY IN FLAMES*, a new work by renowned artist Jenny Holzer that presents her signature text-based art through the medium of augmented reality (AR). This unique artwork, made exclusively for the museum's collection and available through a standalone application for mobile devices, provides three distinct AR experiences—two site-specific works that engage the Guggenheim Bilbao's architecture and a third that can be accessed from anywhere in the world. *LIKE BEAUTY IN FLAMES* harnesses new technology in a continuation of what Holzer does best: placing thought-provoking texts in the public sphere in a democratic and accessible way.

At the Guggenheim Bilbao, an AR version of one of Holzer's LED signs glides through the central atrium, the column bending and spiraling as *Truisms* in English, Spanish, Basque, and French scroll past. Each of the museum's three floors provides a different experience, as the LED's interaction with the building's architecture shifts depending on one's vantage point.

Outside, AR projections appear on the museum's facade from five locations around the campus in a virtual echo of the artist's monumental 2019 work *For Bilbao*, which was presented in conjunction with her retrospective exhibition *Thing Indescribable*. The texts selected by Holzer for the AR projections are by other authors; the work's title, *LIKE BEAUTY IN FLAMES*, is borrowed from Polish poet Anna Świrszczyńska's poem "Beauty Dies," one of the many arresting texts that Holzer has made into immaterial spectacle.

The artwork's final component enables users to see Holzer's *Truisms* take form in space in any setting. This new possibility embodies the spirit that has informed Holzer's practice throughout her long career of placing language in the public domain to spark reflection and contemplation.

Technology in the service of art

LIKE BEAUTY IN FLAMES, 2021

Augmented reality application



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This immersive and dynamic artwork is made possible by a mobile app that uses AR to provide unlimited access to three virtual experiences. Harnessing augmented reality, advanced image-recognition technology, 3D spatial positioning and cutting-edge graphics features, users can watch the AR version of the LED sign move through the museum's atrium. They can also see a recreation of Holzer's nighttime projections, facilitated by their devices' GPS and gyroscope features, which direct them to various points around the outside of the museum. Combining digital technologies with the real world, this innovative app developed by London-based digital agency Holition brings Holzer's practice to users' own mobile devices.

LIKE BEAUTY IN FLAMES demonstrates a commitment on the part of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao to technology in the arts. This project marks the beginning of a three-year plan to present pioneering projects in which technology is central to the artwork.

Jenny Holzer

Holzer's work has been an integral part of the museum's fabric since its inception; the towering *Installation for Bilbao* (1997) was commissioned for the museum's opening. Installed prominently in the atrium, the work is made up of nine luminous columns, each measuring over 12 meters in height. Five of Holzer's inscribed stone benches also form part of the collection, along with two works made for *Thing Indescribable*: a vertical LED sign called *THERE WAS A WAR* and the stunning light projection *For Bilbao*.

For over four decades, Holzer has experimented with the written word, constantly exploring strategies for the display of her works. Texts—sometimes the artist's own, other times quotations by writers she admires—appear in bold fonts chosen for their direct, approachable quality. Since 1996 she has projected words in light onto landscapes and architecture, an act of ephemeral graffiti that recalls her early practice of pasting anonymous *Truisms* posters on the streets of New York City. The *Truisms*, comprising over 250 single-sentence declarations, embody a range of voices and viewpoints, eliciting diverse responses. The artist has a long-standing interest in appropriating the modes and media of official communication, presenting compelling messages on electronic signboards, bronze plaques, and stone benches as well as T-shirts, condom wrappers, and pencils. Her work has long occupied an important place in public art, often through temporary offerings such as large-scale projections and roving digital billboard trucks emblazoned with her texts. Her voice remains resonant and courageous, inviting viewer engagement through the simple act of reading.

Related activities

Artist's Talk (June 2)

Streamed conversation between artist Jenny Holzer and Lekha Hileman Waitoller, curator of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao collection, about Holzer's new artwork.

Creative Session Jenny Holzer Goes Digital (May 25 and 27)

Participants will discover artist Jenny Holzer's career and her new work of art, *LIKE BEAUTY IN FLAMES*, in this workshop led by educator Aitziber Aguirre.

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Raid Live & Online! AR in digital format (June 19)

Online and live gathering to learn more about the conceptual and technical keys of the artwork *LIKE BEAUTY IN FLAMES* with Luis Pablo Elvira, Associate Director of Information Technologies of the museum, and Luz Maguregui, Education Coordinator of the museum

Other resources:

[Website](#)

[Images](#)

Video

- [Experience *LIKE BEAUTY IN FLAMES* by Jenny Holzer](#) (1:05 min)
- [Jenny Holzer's words](#) (1:06 min)

For more information:

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