



Consulate General
of the Republic of Poland
in Vancouver

PRESS RELEASE

**Lem, Solaris, and the mythology of the indigenous tribes of the North Coast
Stanisław Lem's birthday in Vancouver, British Columbia - August 17, 2021**

On August 17th, in celebration of the Polish writer, futurologist and philosopher Stanisław Lem's hundredth birthday, the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland, in partnership with Vancouver Mural Festival, invite you to view the artist Dimitri Sirenko's mural inspired by the writer.

Your presence, at 2.00 PM, at No. 61, 5th East Avenue, in the heart of Mount Pleasant, the centre of the mural district, will allow you to contemplate the artist's inspiration drawn from the Polish visionary's most famous novel, *Solaris*.

In this work, Lem, [1921- 2006] demonstrates his conviction that, after five billion years of separate development, any alien creature will have far less in common with humans than a bacterium.

The mural's creator is Dimitri Sirenko – Canadian artist (born in Ukraine) who derives inspiration from both classical and modern painting disciplines. For Dimitri, art is a language that can communicate on both conscious and subconscious levels which is why aesthetic execution of his art is a big part of making that language more accessible for a wider range of audiences.

Dimitri graduated from Emily Carr University of Art and Design with a major in animation, which is why he works as an art director in animation and video game industries. He won the National Championship of Art Battle as well as Battle of the Brush.

The mural's title is "The Reflection". – Dimitri Sirenko says:

"What is truly the reason behind humanity's unquenchable desire to reach out far into the skies? Do we really wish to find other civilizations exceeding our own in technology, social development and overall intelligence or are we simply looking for our own reflection?"

With this artwork, I wanted to celebrate Stanislaw Lem and some of his prominent ideas and concepts. Furthermore, I strived to illustrate the otherworldly ocean showing the astronaut explorer the exact thing what we as humans need rather than what we think we need.

In conclusion, my hope is that this homage to Lem and his philosophical ideas is able to reach the audience and help guide them to the path of exploring and being more aware of themselves, others and planet Earth."

"How do you expect to communicate with the ocean, when you can't even understand one another?"

— Stanisław Lem, *Solaris*

"We have no need of other worlds. We need mirrors. We don't know what to do with other worlds. A single world, our own, suffices us; but we can't accept it for what it is."

— Stanisław Lem, *Solaris*

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Lem's writing touches upon the most important aspects related to the functioning of human beings and the search for extra-terrestrial life. He asks such questions as: how does technology affect people's lives? Is man responsible for the world? And finally: what is the future of our planet? All these issues remain relevant today.

Lem was described by American media as "the man with future inside him." It is amazing how much of what he predicted he got right. This ranges across artificial intelligence, the theory of search engines (he called it "ariadnology"), bionics, virtual reality ("phantomatics"), technological singularity and nanotechnology.

London Times suggested that his novels should carry the label: THE READING OF THIS BOOK IS GOOD FOR YOU.

Lem's books reveal to the reader what is as yet *unknown*; what might happen tomorrow, or never at all. His philosophy compels the reader to think more deeply, and to reflect on the complexity of man's biology and history.

The slogan of the celebration of the centenary of Stanisław Lem's birth is: "I've seen the future". It is more than a catchy phrase - it mirrors the accuracy of his futurological speculations which makes his books such engaging reading today.

The mural contains hidden contents (yours to discover!) that are related to Poland, North America First Nations' culture as well as Israel and Ukraine - which are a kind of surprise providing information about his life as well as a form of the recognition that the event takes place on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səilwətaʔt / selílwitlh (Tsilil-Waututh) First Nations.

The mural dedicated to Lem is the first major cultural project related to Poland carried out with the participation of the Polish institutions in Vancouver since the announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic. The previous project was the staging of the opera "The Passenger" by Mieczysław Wajenberg in January and February 2020. It was the result of a project carried out in cooperation with the UBC School of Music and UBC Opera. The Canadian premiere of Mieczysław Wajenberg's "The Passenger" took place at the Chan Center for the Performing Arts.

We hope to see you on the 17th, and that you find this occasion an elevating experience.

Details and news:

<https://www.gov.pl/web/canada-en/lem-100>

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=PLinVancouver&set=a.132594789039544>

Mount Pleasant Mural Map: Dimitri Sirenko – (2): <https://vanmuralfest.ca/mount-pleasant>

Twitter: [@PLinVancouver](https://twitter.com/PLinVancouver)

Facebook: [@PLinVancouver](https://www.facebook.com/PLinVancouver)

IG: [@vanmuralfest](https://www.instagram.com/vanmuralfest)

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Dimitri Sirenko - artist: <https://dimitriartist.com>

More Information about Stanisław Lem:

www.lem.pl; www.culture.pl

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In September 1974, the FBI received a letter. The accusations in the letter were shocking – it told of a communist conspiracy aimed at the hearts and minds of America through propaganda in the subtle guise of science fiction. Major science-fiction publishers and organizations had been infiltrated, and their agents, notable figures in the genre, were abroad in the West. The orchestrator of it all was a communist committee, acting under the name... Stanisław Lem.

<https://culture.pl/en/article/philip-k-dick-stanislaw-lem-is-a-communist-committee>

Had you been infiltrated already?

If not, we invite you to the event on August 17th in Vancouver:

Stanisław Lem: The man with the future inside him

From the 1950s, Polish science fiction writer Stanisław Lem began firing out prescient explorations of our present and far beyond.

Decades ago, Stanisław Lem wrote about the reality in which we live today.

Lem was a Polish writer of science fiction and essays on various subjects, including philosophy, futurology, and literary criticism. Many of his science fiction stories are of satirical and humorous character. Lem's books have been translated into over 40 languages and have sold over 45 million copies. The Polish Parliament declared 2021 Stanisław Lem Year.

His writing reached far beyond the borders of the genre. In addition to many novels and stories, he composed a huge philosophical treatise on the relation of human beings and machines, a good deal of pungently argued literary criticism, a volume of reviews of nonexistent books, a stochastic theory of narrative fiction, an experimental detective novel, speculative essays dealing with artificial intelligence, cybernetics, cosmology, genetic engineering, game theory, sociology, and evolution, radio plays and screenplays.

Paul Grimstad, *The New Yorker*

Stanisław Lem is one of the greatest writers of the 20th century, an innovator and a classic at the same time. He moved within many literary genres, science fiction brought him world fame and popularity. Lem ennobled the popular literary genre, which is science fiction, and raised it to true artistic and intellectual heights.

The strength of Lem's prose, which can attract today's readers, is the universality of thinking - the skillful combination of adventure with science and philosophy. In addition, he was able to translate his thoughts into interesting plots.

Stanisław Lem was probably the first sci-fi writer to accurately predict the end of paper books and the arrival of electronic formats and e-book readers. He did so in his 1961 novel "A Return from the Stars", some 40 years ahead of any first attempts with e-paper. Lem imagined e-books as little memory crystals which could be loaded onto a device, eerily reminiscent of contemporary tablets. He called it an "opton", but most of us today call it a Kindle:

"The books were crystals with recorded contents. They could be read with the aid of an opton, which was similar to a book but had only one page between the covers. At a touch, successive pages of the text appeared on."

It is amazing how much Lem got right, or even predicted. This ranges across artificial intelligence, the theory of search engines (he called it "ariadnology"), bionics, virtual reality ("phantomatics"), technological singularity and nanotechnology.

Simon Ings "New Scientist"

e-books and tablets, smartphones, Google and even "The Matrix" were all conceived in the mid-20th century by the author of 'Solaris'. How Stanisław Lem predicted the future we live in?

<https://culture.pl/en/article/13-things-lem-predicted-about-the-future-we-live-in>

(...) his fiction seems at a distance from the daily cares and passions, and conveys the sense of a mind hovering above the boundaries of the human condition: (...) his imagination is so powerful and pure that no matter what world he creates it is immediately convincing because of its concreteness and plentitude, the intimacy and authority with which it is occupied... read Lem for yourself. He is a major writer, and one of the deep spirits of our age.

Theodore Solotaroff "The New York Times Book Review"

I am an atheist for moral reasons. I believe that we recognize the creator through his work. In my opinion, the world is constructed so badly that I prefer to believe that no one created it!

— Stanisław Lem, - Master's Voice

Lem invented entirely new chapters in human history, not happy endings.

Solaris reflects Lem's pessimistic attitude to the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. It's not that alien intelligences aren't out there, Lem says, because they almost certainly are but extraterrestrial versions of reason and reasonableness may look very different to our own.

Philip J. Farmer, „The New York Times Book Review”

Since Mr. Lem is a world class author, comparisons between the great Polish author Joseph Conrad (who wrote in English) and Mr. Lem (who writes in Polish) are pertinent. Both are deeply pessimistic, but Mr. Lem (like Mark Twain) uses humor as an instrument to deal with the tragic and the inevitable.

Theodore Sturgeon, „The New York Times Book Review”

Lem, the Polish author, has been praised as the world's greatest writer of science fiction. Mr. Lem has no equal in his literary explorations of machines and their physical and philosophical potentialities.

Philip J. Farmer, „The New York Times Book Review”

All books by this Polish master of intellectual science fiction should come with a label on the cover warning: "Handle With Care." Mr. Lem is a moralist, an ironist, a man of wide erudition (in both science and literature) who has little patience with the shortcomings of his fellow man.