

Premiere of Ars Electronica Linz's exhibition in Bilbao, Spain:

# Artists as Catalysts

(Linz / Bilbao, July 3, 2013) "All artists are alike. They dream of doing something that's more social, more collaborative, and more real than art" (Dan Graham). This insight inspired "Artists as Catalysts" and launched the development of this exhibition running from July 4 to September 8, 2013 at Alhóndiga Bilbao. In collaboration with Lourdes Fernández, director of the cultural institution that recently underwent a Philippe Starck makeover, Ars Electronica has assembled an exhibition subdivided into three themes: Environment and Sustainable Future; Control and Manipulation of Our Mediatized World; and Find Your Voice and Express Yourself. The works on display here challenge our perceptions, affront and surprise us, call into question concepts like private vs. public spheres and surveillance and control, subsume natural and artificial processes, and deal with them artistically. The artists and their works function as catalysts that trigger discourses, bring out new ways of considering things and open channels. Audience members are cordially invited to engage in this confrontation, to actively scrutinize these issues, to seek answers as well as new questions. The exhibition constitutes just the start, a first step.

## 12 Works by Prominent Artists

On display are 12 works by internationally acclaimed artists Seiko Mikami, Julian Oliver, Danja Vasiliev, Paolo Cirio, Alessandro Ludovico, Manu Luksch, Matthew Gardiner, Ehu Zarata, Daan van den Berg, Eric Paolos, Cesar Harada and Finnbogi Pétursson. The artists themselves have their say in an accompanying installation. "Artists as Catalysts" is running from July 4 to September 8, 2013.

## A Show in Alhóndiga Bilbao

The Alhóndiga is one of downtown Bilbao's most prominent architectural landmarks. Designed in 1909 by Ricardo Bastida, the building long served as a wine warehouse. Today, it's a sort of multipurpose community center for recreational and cultural activities. It recently underwent a facelift by renowned architect/designer Philippe Starck. Alhóndiga Bilbao is an innovative space that includes a mediatheque, fitness center, swimming pool, showrooms, auditorium, a multiplex cinema, multipurpose space, restaurants, cafés and shops. Alhóndiga Bilbao has also established itself as a lively event venue.

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Artists as Catalysts: <http://export.aec.at/bilbao2013/>

Interviews, fotostories and videos at the AE Blog: <http://www.aec.at/aeblog/en/tag/artists-as-catalysts/>

Alhóndiga Bilbao: <http://www.alhondigabilbao.com/en/home>

Ars Electronica Linz: <http://www.aec.at/news/en/>

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## Artist as Catalyst / Artists and Works

### Cesar Harada (UK): Protei (2011)

The big oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico triggered Cesar Harada's decision to develop a low-cost, open-source, oil-collecting robot. "Protei" is what the French-Japanese inventor, environmental activist, entrepreneur and artist has dubbed his research project, which is designed to offer fast, economical and efficient help in combating pollution of the oceans by oil, plastic or radioactive substances. Cesar Harada is working on unmanned robotic sailboats featuring an innovative design that makes them incredibly agile. As an intelligent swarm, they can tack against the wind to effectively absorb oil spills. Such a flotilla can be remote-controlled by human operators or can function totally autonomously. Cesar Harada used the Kickstarter crowd funding platform to finance "Protei."

Cesar Harada's Ted Talk about Protei: [http://www.ted.com/talks/cesar\\_harada\\_a\\_novel\\_idea\\_for\\_cleaning\\_up\\_oil\\_spills.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/cesar_harada_a_novel_idea_for_cleaning_up_oil_spills.html)  
Protei on Kickstarter: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/cesarminoru/protei-open-hardware-oil-spill-cleaning-sailing-ro>

### Daan van den Berg (NL): MERRICK (2010)

"Merrick" is a follow-up to the Ikea "Hacking" series. Daan van den Berg invites consumers to create new furniture out of Ikea components. To make it possible, he hacked Ikea's computer server and infected the files of the LAMPAN lamp with a digital version of the elephantiasis virus. Spread by parasitic worms, this disease causes extreme enlargement of the skin and the tissue beneath it. Since the computer virus causes a different deformation each time, each and every lamp turned out on a 3-D printer is one-of-a-kind piece.

Daan van den Berg on MERRICK at tagr.tv: <http://tagr.tv/2010/merrick-mutated-ikea-lamp-ars-electronica/>

### Eric Paulos (US): Energy Parasites (2011)

"Energy Parasites" are tiny handmade objects like lamps or waterwheels that tap the quantity of energy they need to run from all possible (and improbable) sources in the public sphere. Without giving much thought to the energy's origins or rightful owner, they either reroute the energy so derived or else they use/store it themselves. With his "Energy Parasites," Eric Paulos calls into question conventional conceptions of energy, the attribution of its ownership, and the possibilities of generating it. Another core element of his work is to encourage installation visitors to regard energy as something that's produced and used at a certain time and place, and in a particular way.

Energy Parasites: <http://www.energyparasites.net/>

Eric Paulos: <http://www.paulos.net/>

Energy Parasites at Prix Ars Electronica 2012: <http://prix2012.aec.at/prixwinner/6387/>

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### Finnbogi Pétursson (IS): Earth (2009)

Icelandic artist Finnbogi Pétursson generates resonance at a frequency of 7.8 hertz in a basin filled with water. The sound can be felt and heard, as well as seen in the form of waves on the water's surface. This particular frequency corresponds to a physical phenomenon known as the Schumann resonance, which describes the vibration of the Earth's electromagnetic field. For Pétursson, this frequency is our planet's pulse.

Finnbogi Pétursson: <http://www.finnbogi.com/>

Earth on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbUY8y-jhAI>

### Golan Levin, Shawn Sims (both US): The Free Universal Construction Kit (2012)

The Free Universal Construction Kit is an array of adapters that enable users to interlock pieces from the 10 most popular toy construction kits. Since all these diverse pieces can now be interconnected, the upshot is completely new forms of exchange involving what were previously discrete, closed systems. Like other grassroots projects designed to foster interoperability, the Free Universal Construction Kit uses proprietary protocols in order to make available to the general public materials that aren't—or can't be—exploited by commercial enterprises. In other words, the Free Universal Construction Kit isn't a product; it's a provocation. It's a set of functional adapters to interconnect Lego, Duplo, Fischertechnik, Gears! Gears! Gears!, K'Nex, Krinkles (Bristle Blocks), Lincoln Logs, Tinkertoys, Zome and Zoob components. The adapters can be downloaded free of charge at various internet file-sharing sites in the form of models, which users can then fabricate themselves with DIY production equipment such as Makerbot, a reasonably priced, open-source 3-D printer. Thus, the Free Universal Construction Kit also fosters a process of reflection about intellectual property, open-source culture and reverse engineering as a cultural technique.

The Free Universal Construction Kit: <http://fffff.at/free-universal-construction-kit/>

The Free Universal Construction Kit on Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/37778172>

Golan Levin on The Free Universal Construction Kit on Shelby.tv: [http://shelby.tv/video/vimeo/44337372/ignite\\_eyeo2012-12-golan-levin-mov](http://shelby.tv/video/vimeo/44337372/ignite_eyeo2012-12-golan-levin-mov)

### Julian Oliver (NZ), Danja Vasiliev (RU): Newstweek (2011)

"Newstweek" is a device to manipulate news. The small, unobtrusive apparatus plugs into a wall socket and appears to be part of the on-site infrastructure. It enables Newstweek agents stationed offsite to manipulate news items that are being read at the time on nearby laptops, cell phones and tablets. While political and business interests endeavor to spin-doctor public opinion to their advantage, Newstweek, in turn, offers citizens the opportunity to manipulate the news themselves and thus to influence the reality prevailing in the public sphere. Julian Oliver and Danja Vasiliev are also trying to make the point that in times of seemingly unlimited technical possibilities, ignorance about how this technology functions is constantly on the rise as well, which means that the door is left wide open to manipulation of facts on their way from source to destination, from the server to the screen.

Newstweek: <http://newstweek.com/>

Julian Oliver and Danja Vasiliev on Newstweek: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYNLhMIS1rg>

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### Manu Luksch (AT/UK): Faceless (2007)

In making “faceless,” Austrian artist Manu Luksch shot the entire film without using a single camera (of her own). Filming was done entirely by public video surveillance cameras. The location of this extraordinary shoot was the City of London. Once the footage was “in the can,” the artist sued to obtain all film in which she was visible. The faces of all other persons—that is, unwitting passers-by—were blotted out or deleted in order to protect their privacy. The result is an extraordinary film that pointedly illustrates the ever-more-seamless surveillance of the public sphere.

About Faceless: [www.ambienttv.net/pdf/facelessproject.pdf](http://www.ambienttv.net/pdf/facelessproject.pdf)

Faceless Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLzjCeGYgbg>

### Matthew Gardiner (AUS): Light is time, folds are space. (2012)

“Light is time, folds are space” is a sculpture by Matthew Gardiner. His creation was inspired by structures in the nano-range, but he supersized them so the work completely fills the observer’s field of vision. The three-dimensional geometric patterns are illuminated by various continuously moving light sources, the result of which is that the spatial impression the sculpture makes is in constant transition.

Matthew Gardiner: <http://matthewgardiner.net>

### Paolo Cirio, Alessandro Ludovico (both IT): Face to Facebook (2011)

As the final installment of their “Hacking Monopolism” trilogy, Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico set their sights on online behemoth Facebook. Aided and abetted by homebrew software, they purloined a million Facebook profiles, filtered them with a facial recognition program and then grouped them according to the similarities of the data and the faces. The profiles reshuffled in this way were then forwarded to an online dating site and owners of the profiles were introduced to one another via e-mail. It hadn’t even been online for a week before “face to facebook” was creating an uproar ranging from media coverage worldwide to death threats and lawsuits. Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico were ultimately forced to take their project offline.

Face to Facebook: [www.face-to-facebook.net](http://www.face-to-facebook.net)

Video Face to Facebook: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQ1vYoXaqE>

Talk of Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico on Face to Facebook: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZKW0ArCmmk>

### Seiko Mikami (JP): Desire of Codes (2011)

Seiko Mikami’s large-scale installation “Desire of Codes” shows how our Information Society blurs the boundaries between a body of data in the virtual world and a physical body in the real world. The nightmarish setting of this three-part interactive work: a white wall on which are mounted 90 feelers resembling the sensory appendages of an insect, each with a built-in surveillance camera (Ninety Wriggling Wall Units); hanging from the ceiling are six large robotic arms resembling tentacles, a camera and a laser projector mounted on the end of each one (Six Multi-Perspective Search Arms);

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and finally a round projection surface 3.5 meters in diameter—the Compound Eye Detector Screen resembling a fly’s multifaceted eye. Installation visitors feel themselves being targeted by efficiently functioning surveillance machinery. Extremely sensitive cameras and microphones that can register movements and sounds beyond the threshold of human perception record the slightest disturbance. Whatever is picked up is stored to a high-performance databank that is the actual core of “Desire of Codes.” On the installation’s jumbo display screen, visitors view a real-time projection of their footage interspersed with material previously recorded by the system as well as film from surveillance cameras set up in public spaces worldwide.

Seiko Mikami: <http://www.idd.tamabi.ac.jp/~mikami/artworks/>

Video Desire of Codes: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PKT44tU658>

### Paolo Cirio (IT): Street Ghosts (2012)

“After Google’s ‘Street View’ project got started photographing not only all the world’s streets and squares but also indiscriminately photographing passers-by without obtaining their consent, I decided to sort of turn this process around. In my ‘Street Ghosts,’ I take these Google snapshots, prepare life-size posters from them, and then I put them up on the building walls or fences at the exact spot where the person was standing at the time the shot was taken.” Paolo Cirio’s “Street Ghosts” reveal who was pictured where on Google Street View. And even if the posters that he attaches to walls and fences quickly disappear, the digital “originals” nevertheless remain stored for eternity in Google’s databank.

Paolo Cirio: <http://www.paolocirio.net/work/street-ghosts/street-ghosts.php>

Video on Street Ghosts: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PKT44tU658>

Video on Street Ghosts:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=JbcoOm9VGqC&list=PLJHWosFmMRqqGaTfKpoevnglyd2LLvMd](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=JbcoOm9VGqC&list=PLJHWosFmMRqqGaTfKpoevnglyd2LLvMd)  
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### EHU ZARATA LAB / Josu Rekalde, Mikel Arce, Enrike Hurtado (all SP): THINK SILENTLY ACT WITH NOISE (2013)

This is a walk-through installation that consists of two green wall panels like the ones we’re all familiar with from school. Installation visitors can record their thoughts on both panels, whereby every point, line and word they draw or write with chalk onto the panel generates a sound.

Josu Rekalde: [www.josurekalde.com](http://www.josurekalde.com)

Mikel Arce: [www.mikelarce.com](http://www.mikelarce.com)

Enrike Hurtado: [www.ixi-audio.net](http://www.ixi-audio.net)

Video on THINK SILENTLY ACT WITH NOISE: <http://vimeo.com/65166409>

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