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1,564 submissions from 96 countries:

STARTS Prize 2021 for Remix el Barrio and Oceans in Transformation

(Linz / Brussels, 16.6.2021) The prestigious STARTS Prize is part of a long-term initiative of the European Commission. The competition aims to highlight groundbreaking projects where science, technology and art interact, contributing to economic and social innovation. In 2021, the STARTS Prize received 1,564 submissions from 96 countries. Alexandra Deschamps-Sonsino (UK), Nicola Triscott (UK), Alexander Mankowsky (DE), Fumi Yamazaki (JP) and Francesca Bria (IT), this year's STARTS jurors, spent an entire weekend sifting through 1,564 best-practice projects for the future of Europe. In the end, this first-rate jury agreed on two main winners, 10 Honorary Mentions and 18 Nominations. This year's GRAND PRIZE FOR ARTISTIC EXPLORATION goes to the architects of the "Territorial Agency" for their outstanding project "Oceans in Transformation." The GRAND PRIZE FOR INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION was awarded to Barcelona-based designers Anastasia Pistofidou, Marion Real and The Remixers at Fab Lab Barcelona, IaaC (INT) for their groundbreaking project "Remix el Barrio, Food Waste Biomaterial Makers."

STARTS Prize ...

The STARTS Prize of the European Commission is awarded annually and endowed with a total of 40,000 euros. The prize is awarded to innovative projects at the interface of science, technology and art that have the potential to significantly impact economic and social innovation in Europe. A GRAND PRIZE FOR ARTISTIC EXPLORATION and a GRAND PRIZE FOR INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION will be awarded, in addition to 10 Honorary Mentions and 18 Nominations. The winners will each receive 20,000 euros and will be prominently featured at the Ars Electronica Festival in Linz and at a series of events organized by consortium partners BOZAR, Waag, INOVA+, T6 Ecosystems, French Tech Grande Provence and the Frankfurt Book Fair.

... and STARTS Initiative

The STARTS Prize is part of the European Commission's long-term initiative of the same name, which sees the digital transformation of industry, culture and society as the main driver for new cross-disciplinary and cross-genre collaborations. It aims to combine technology and artistic practice in the best possible way and create a win-win situation for both European innovation policy and the art world. The declared aim of the STARTS initiative is to put the spotlight on people and projects that help us comprehend and solve Europe's social, ecological and economic challenges.



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Grand Prize - Artistic Exploration

Awarded for artistic exploration and art works where appropriation by the arts has a strong potential to influence or alter the use, deployment, or perception of technology.

Oceans in Transformation / Territorial Agency - John Palmesino and Ann-Sofi Rönnskog (INT)

<https://www.territorialagency.com/oceans>

<https://ocean-archive.org/collection/49>

“(...) a strong call to collaborate across disciplines to deepen our knowledge of the oceans and to act together to safeguard the future of our living ecosystems.” (excerpt from the jury statement).

No other habitat on our planet is as dynamic and sensitive as the ocean. And although they are a key element of the geosystem, the world’s oceans are comparatively under-explored. In “Oceans in Transformation,” John Palmesino and Ann-Sofi Rönnskog explore the impact our actions have on the world’s oceans. Their “Territorial Agency” actively engages with the insights of world systems theory, linking data and narratives that are usually rarely connected. “Oceans in Transformation” is about ocean acidification and overexploitation of virgin forests, overfishing and ocean warming, increased use of natural resources in coastal areas and sea level rise, just as it is about the destruction of the cryosphere and the loss of languages.

Through exhibitions, seminars, workshops, and online outreach, it will spark cross-disciplinary discussions among scientists, activists, conservationists, and policymakers, and strengthen our capacity to act to meet the ecological challenges of the Anthropocene. “Oceans in Transformation” brings together science, architecture, and art to open up an innovative perspective on the transformative processes that are shaping our contemporary societies and their territorial narratives. For its comprehensive analysis and outstanding preparation of research results, the “Territorial Agency” receives the STARTS Prize 2021.

Grand Prize - Innovative Collaboration

Awarded for innovative collaboration between industry or technology and the arts (and the cultural and creative sectors in general) that open new pathways for innovation.

Remix el Barrio, Food Waste Biomaterial Makers / Anastasia Pistofidou, Marion Real and The Remixers at Fab Lab Barcelona, IaaC (INT)

<https://fablabbcn.org/projects/siscode-remix-el-barrio>

“The jury was most impressed by the wide array of beautifully up-cycled products made from waste.” (Excerpt from the jury's statement)



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260,000 tons of food are simply thrown away every year in Catalonia. That amount would meet the food needs of 500,000 people. To combat this food waste, designers living and working in Barcelona joined forces to form “Remix El Barrio” and began to develop ideas and concepts. They considered how food waste could best be collected and processed, and what future uses it could be put to. They experimented with making different materials and tested different manufacturing techniques. Thanks to the creativity of the participants and the close exchange with peers, lab gurus, external experts, local suppliers and potential users, a whole range of narratives, materials, products and services have emerged: Coffee bean husks become paper and packaging, olive pits become lamps, chairs and tiles, avocado pits become natural dyes, used oils become soaps, orange peels form the raw material for jackets, etc. For their impressively creative and productive approach to the problem of food waste, the initiative “Remix el Barrio, FoodWaste Biomaterial Makers” is awarded the STARTS Prize 2021.

Honorary Mentions STARTS PRIZE '21

mEat me / Theresa Schubert (DE)

<https://theresaschubert.com/>

“By treating the human body as just another food choice, her work puts us back into the animal kingdom and nature where we belong.” (excerpt from the jury's statement)

Many posthumanist thinkers emphasize a non-human-centered view of the world and demand that we deal more humbly with nature and stop hierarchizing species. Theresa Schubert draws a radical conclusion: if we treat humans the same as animals, we should also be material and food. In her artistic research project and performance “mEat me” Schubert demonstrates this provocative scenario as an alternative reality. Fearlessly exploiting her body, she creates aesthetic experiences that reject human exceptionalism. Within the framework of an atmospherically dense performance consisting of video projections and spatial sound, “mEat me” shows the process of human flesh production and the consumption of one’s own flesh. The artificially developed physicality of her own flesh enters into a dialogue with a voice generated by machine learning models. As an artistic research project, “mEat me” applies innovative biotechnological advances to a project that eschews scientific purpose or monetary intentions. For the laboratory process, a serum extracted from her own blood was used to propagate her previously harvested muscle cells. The resulting cultured human flesh pushes normative boundaries and dissolves the consumerist hierarchy between humans and animals. It addresses the pressing issue of food supply in times of mass meat production and its relevance not only to our consciousness, but to our planet.



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The Living Light / Nova Innova (NL)

<https://livinglight.info>

"(...) an eye opener for the engineers of the sensory based Internet of Things." (excerpt from the jury's statement)

Compost, sludge, urine, plants - what if we could use all organic waste as sustainable energy sources? Well, we can. With microbial fuel cell (MFC) technology, which the European Commission has already named one of the "100 most radical innovation breakthroughs for the future" in 2019. The "Living Light" project aims to ensure that this innovative technology receives the attention it deserves: in the form of a designer light for both indoor and outdoor use, for example in parking lots. The microbial fuel cells in this project use microbes found in the soil to generate the energy that lights up the lamp.

Project Habitate / Yuning Chan (CN), Tom Hartley (GB), Yishan Qin (CN)

<https://alienyuning.com/habitate>

"Project Habitate provides scientifically sound ideas on how the destructive aspects of the Anthropocene can be countered (...)." (excerpt from the jury's statement)

It is called "ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)" and probably originates from Northeast Asia. In Europe, virtually all ash trees fall victim to this fungus. What we overlook about ash dieback, however, is that hundreds of species of mosses, lichens, and fungi that depend on ash trees are also losing their habitat as their host disappears. Traditional conservation measures offer little hope for these species, and the expected return of resistant ash trees is not likely to happen for decades. With their "Project Habitate," Yuning Chan, Tom Hartley and Yishan Qin therefore propose that we make ourselves "replacement hosts" for endangered species. They have developed a wearable that mimics the bark structure, porosity and pH of ash trees and, incidentally, uses our mobility to support the spore dispersal of various host species. Their "Project Wearable" sees itself as a temporary home for these tiny species, and in turn allows us to play an active role in biodiversity conservation. By creating a new form of coexistence between humans and nature, we can break the cycle of conservation and destruction.

The Growing Pavilion / Company New Heroes/ Biobased Creations (NL)

<https://thegrowingpavilion.com>

"The Growing Pavilion communicates a future-proof approach to beauty, where everything is unique in texture and color." (excerpt from the jury's statement)



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“The Growing Pavilion” is an ode to bio-based materials. It represents a solution that is both necessary and viable to reduce our consumption of fossil resources and mitigate the dynamics of climate change.

"The Growing Pavilion" consists of five raw materials: Wood, agricultural waste, mycelium, cattails and cotton. Each of these materials is left as natural as possible and incorporated into the structure in a visible way; each item retains its own unique character and contributes to the texture, color and atmosphere of the pavilion. Not only is the beauty and stability of the structure impressive, but so is its interior design, with bio-based furniture, lamps and cabinets inside.

The project builds on years of research, the methods and results of which have been continuously documented. Transparency and verifiability are essential when it comes to how much biobased creations can do today and in the near future. And it's all about the future: “The Growing Pavilion” not only wants to show what is possible, but also to initiate a broad discourse. It's not just about new materials, but about raw materials, regulations, innovative design and open-minded consumers.

A Lighter Delicacy / Sorawut Kittibanthorn (TH)

<https://www.sorawutkittibanthorn.com>

“(...) inviting us to change our minds about what is waste and what is food.” (excerpt from the jury statement).

Over 2.3 million tons of feathers are discarded each year in the EU poultry production process and either sent to landfills or incinerated. Sorawut Kittibanthorn proposes an alternative way to recycle feather waste from slaughterhouses. Chemically, chicken feathers are about 91% protein (keratin), which contains up to eight different essential amino acids that we need for a healthy diet. Chicken feathers could therefore be transformed into a new delicacy that mimics the quality and aesthetics of high-end foods. The structure was built with non-animal products, similar to the production of vegan meat. In the end, all the ingredients and selected food binders formed a structure that gives this “feather meat” both strength and flexibility.

Data Garden / Grow Your Own Cloud (INT)

<https://growyourown.cloud/data-garden>

“Data Garden and its installation inspires the audience regarding how humans may be able to work with nature and data, creating regenerative data ecosystems.” (excerpt from the jury's statement)

“Data Garden” is an organism-based data center. This functional CO2-negative data infrastructure is capable of storing and retrieving data in plant DNA. In stark contrast to the carbon emitting data cloud, “Data Garden” works with data naturally, storing it in the DNA of plants that generate their own energy. The encoding process involved converting computer data



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such as JPEGs and MP3s into DNA. Nanopore sequencers are used to retrieve the data from the plants' DNA in near real time. The project offers a vision of a world where design is an interplay between species, ecosystems and technologies. As an interactive work, it brings the public into contact with advanced biotechnology as well as critical issues such as “data warming” (the link between carbon emissions and data storage), genetic modification, and synthetic biology.

The Tides Within Us / Marshmallow Laser Feast (GB), Fraunhofer MEVIS (DE), Natan Sinigaglia (IT)

<https://www.marshmallowlaserfeast.com/tideswithinus>

“(...) opening novel ways of experiencing our bodies.” (excerpt from the jury’s statement)

Marshmallow Laser Feast – a leading immersive art collective – and the Fraunhofer Institute for Digital Medicine MEVIS, which does pioneering work in transforming digital healthcare, have joined forces to explore new ways of processing and communicating scientific knowledge. “The Tides Within Us” visualizes the complex structure of the human body in unprecedented ways, for example by tracking the flow of oxygen through the cardiovascular system. Interactive screens allow audiences to explore the inside of the human body and understand our bodies as a fluid entity. Developing this immersive technology will provide new innovative platforms for experiential learning and, at its best, help change the way we humans learn and think about ourselves in relation to the environment.

ELEVENPLAY x Rhizomatiks “border 2021” / MIKIKO (JP), ELEVENPLAY (JP), Daito Manabe (JP), Motoi Ishibashi (JP), Rhizomatiks (JP), Takayuki Fujimoto (JP), evala (JP).

<https://border.dance/>

“(...) a project that challenges the audience with a highly immersive experience transforming the border of the virtual and the real world.”

In 2015, the director and choreographer MIKIKO, the dance company ELEVENPLAY and the collective Rhizomatiks led by Daito Manabe and Motoi Ishibashi staged “border.” In 2021, they updated the dance piece and developed it into an online and on-site experience for the post-COVID-19 era. Visitors to “border 2021,” equipped with VR headsets, sit on a futuristic vehicle steered by a program and shuttle between a fictional world and the real world; it is dancers who bring them back to reality time and again. The boundaries between the spheres become increasingly blurred. Those viewers who are present online can follow the piece from different perspectives.



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On View / Ania Catherine, Dejha Ti (US)

<https://www.operator.la/on-view>

“(...) raises awareness of the issues such as privacy, data protection, data ethics, and surveillance capitalism (excerpt from the jury statement).”

The exhibition “On View” highlights the omnipresence of surveillance and data mining technologies. At the same time, it raises awareness of the fact that many users give little or no thought to how applications that often seem helpful actually violate their own privacy and constantly collect personal data in the background – in order to sell it for profit. Ostensibly staged as a “non-digital” environment, On View features technologies such as facial recognition, machine learning, and various sensors. At the end of their exhibition tour, visitors find a picture of themselves, framed in gold: they are “On View,” on display!

Cloud Studies / Forensic Architecture (INT)

<https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/cloudstudies>

<https://vimeo.com/421127840>

“Cloud Studies propose a new and radical approach to investigate contemporary clouds, suggesting the need for an alternative cartography of critical zones.” (excerpt from the jury statement)

There are always attempts to cover up human rights violations by states and the military. In order to uncover and document these human rights violations, civil society is dependent on “open sources.” Forensic Architecture is a pioneer of “investigative aesthetics” that enables us to “read” the traces of violence in these data. The group focuses on forms of violence that have increased massively in recent years: the use of chlorine gas and other chemical substances against the civilian population, for example in the Syrian civil war, or tear gas against civilians, often during peaceful demonstrations. Another form of violence is the excessive use of herbicides, which destroy farmland and displace entire agricultural communities, or systematic arson to destroy forests and establish industrial plantations. Behind all these toxic clouds are states or corporations and their quest for power and profit. Unlike kinetic violence, the causes of this kind of “aerial violence” are much more difficult to prove. The dynamics of toxic clouds are elusive and governed by non-linear behavior and multi-causal logic. The Forensic Architecture collective is therefore working with the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Imperial College London (ICL), a world leader in flow simulation. Together, they developed new methods that civil organizations can use to document and analyze aerial violence. By combining digital modeling, machine learning, fluid dynamics, and mathematical simulation in the context of active casework, Forensic Architecture has created a platform for new research practices in the field of human rights.

Ars Electronica: <https://ars.electronica.art/en/news>

STARTS Prize 2021: <https://starts-prize.aec.at/en/>

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