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S+T+ARTS

12 New Regional S+T+ARTS Centers

Repairing the Present through Art-driven Innovation

(Linz, 13.8.2021) As part of the European Commission's S+T+ARTS initiative, 12 new Regional S+T+ARTS Centers will create a space for artists, scientists, and technologists to work together on a common mission: Repairing the present. The S+T+ARTS initiative is a program funded by the European Commission aiming to bring artistic perspectives into the innovation process to address current challenges in today's society.

Throughout the history of art, we have seen "epochs in which a certain art form aspires to effects which could only be fully obtained with a changed technical standard". Artists have always been more than observers and critics of the social fabric but have shown how they can act as catalysts for innovation. Yet, despite this potential, artists have rarely been involved in the research and development of new technologies.

A hundred years after the Bauhaus movement first combined aesthetics and everyday functions, the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von Der Leyen vowed to set up a new European Bauhaus and define an aesthetic for the biggest challenge now facing Europe and the world: the climate crisis. Its role is to make visible, even tangible the environmental, social and economical issues of our times.

Moreover, the European Green Deal, vowing to make Europe the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050, and the Sustainable Development Goals defined by the United Nations require a concerted global effort to find new ways of acquiring knowledge and thus, new actors contributing to the research and development of technologies.

The S+T+ARTS initiative responds to this call by setting up frameworks for scientists, technologists, and artists to start conversations and work towards challenging the status-quo with more sustainable innovation. With technology now pervading and shaping almost every aspect of our lives, the S+T+ARTS initiative proposes a new understanding of sustainability centered around humanity. This involves a redefinition of the role of technology in society and an acknowledgement that artistic practices can contribute to its development.

The initiative is made up of pillars with different foci:

The S+T+ARTS Prize launched in 2016 and coordinated by Ars Electronica, celebrates cooperations between artists and industry and the ways in which artistic exploration can alter the use, deployment and perception of technology.

The S+T+ARTS Residencies set up long-term collaborations to define methodologies for cross-disciplinary projects that integrate the arts in the development of new technologies and lead to human-centered outcomes.

The S+T+ARTS Lighthouses - WEAR Sustain (2017-2019), RE-FREAM (2018-2021) and Mind Spaces (2019-2021) - involve artists in research that addresses specific challenges in the industry and society.

The S+T+ARTS Academies aim to meet the current need for digital literacy and facilitate the education of children and young adults.

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The S+T+ARTS Regional Centers zoom in on local and regional issues seeking solutions driven by artistic, visionary perspectives and aiming to set up frameworks for future cross-disciplinary collaborations that can be translated at a global level.

The Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) is at the forefront of the digital transformation of European companies, supporting them in making the most of digital opportunities to become more competitive and future-proof. As part of DIHs, projects like Better Factory, Media Futures and Vojext focus on applications of digitisation in the manufacturing, media and construction industries.

The Regional S+T+ARTS Centers (RSCs) pillar was first launched in 2018 as a response to the need to address local issues in an increasingly globalised context. Regional S+T+ARTS Centers establish themselves as a nexus for local and international partners from the fields of art, industry, business, and research.

Their aim is two-fold: to bring global challenges closer to the communities they affect and facilitate the development of solutions specific to the region, and at the same time, to bring the message of the S+T+ARTS initiative at a local level, by placing humanist innovation at the heart of contemporary reflections on our present and future.

Led by the Belgian Cleantech Hub Snowball (BE), cultural institutions like MAXXI Museum (IT), STATE (DE), Onassis Stegi (EL), In4Art (NL), MEET (IT), CCCB (ES), Ars Electronica (AT), join the art & tech hubs Sony CSL Paris (FR), Kersnikova (SI), CYENS (CY), Art Hub Copenhagen (DK) for a program consisting of S+T+ARTS Expert Meetings, S+T+ARTS Academies, S+T+ARTS Exhibitions and Prototyping Parks and S+T+ARTS Fellowships.

Repairing the present encourages a critique of the present, the exploration beyond its current limitations, and the reimagination of other possible futures. To that end, the program fosters the development of methodologies and frameworks for long-term cross-disciplinary collaborations that can lead to products, tools and processes with a positive impact on society at large.

Each Regional S+T+ARTS Center will build a S+T+ARTS Expert Program involving government, industry, ICT, civil society, education, academia, and culture representatives to define local challenges that can benefit from the creative and critical perspective of artists.

The challenges will be addressed in 21 artist fellowships and 27 S+T+ARTS Academy events.

By creating the right synergies from the start and thoughtfully match-making artists with local stakeholders, the consortium partners will set the stage for the definition of shared goals and the exchange of knowledge. Artists will step into the labs of research institutions and R&D departments of companies, and researchers will be invited into artists' studios. Together they will develop new concepts, tools and products and analyse their potential impact across governments and businesses. The results will be showcased in Prototyping Parks and exhibitions set up across Europe.

In parallel to artist fellowships, further programmes will engage citizens and youth in S+T+ARTS Academy events ranging from education workshops, field expeditions, school visits, hackathons, to conferences and networking activities.

Following the dictum, *think globally, but act locally*, the Regional S+T+ARTS Centers aim to create a ripple effect by transferring the locally-developed, cross-disciplinary solutions to the

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wider pan-European or global context. Committed to *Repairing the Present*, the 12 partners hope to spark a critical discussion about the present and how we collectively envision a better future.

The local S+T+ARTS Center in Austria, Ars Electronica (AT) is Austria's leading cultural, educational and scientific institute active in the field of new media art since 1979. As part of the project, *Repairing the Present*, Ars Electronica will host one artist fellowship that focuses on advancing innovation in the field of biotechnologies through circular economy strategies to raise awareness about the ecological impact of the regional plastics industry and their innovation & sustainability strategies.

Each consortium partner will host fellowships and/or prototyping parks in conjunction with a multitude of other programs at a local level between November 2021 to December 2022.

An open call will be launched in October addressing international artists with a strong interest in sustainable innovation, cross-disciplinary collaborations, as well as technological experimentation that addresses real-life problems. Fellowships are scheduled to start in January/February 2022.

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