

Crossing the Bridge with Black Swans: University of Art and Design Linz Presents New Media Art at Ars Electronica
The Campus Will Be Bustling With Artists and Scientists From 24 Other Universities

In wild nature, black swans are a rare thing to be found. In economy, a black swan is an unpredictable event with far-reaching consequences. Recent years have produced numerous such events, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine among them.

This year, the Ars Electronica programme prepared by the University of Art and Design Linz, **“Von schwarzen Schwänen...”**, deals with the seemingly impossible. It envisions the unthinkable – and reverses the negative signs: Here, black swans have a positive meaning. They are unthinkable images and metaphors serving as a source of inspiration for the audience.

Seven departments of three different institutes of the University of Art and Design Linz exhibit their newest works from 6 to 11 September 2022: **Interface Cultures**, the department which initiated the university's collaboration with the Ars Electronica Festival back in 2004, will present 22 contributions by international students and host a Leonardo Laser Talk. Visitors can experience this special programme titled **‘Crossing the Bridge’** at Kepler's Gardens (Altenbergerstraße 69, 4040 Linz) – with one exception (exhibited at the university). The Department of Interface Cultures, founded by media art pioneers Christa Sommerer and *Laurent Mignonneau*, has become a creative source for the Ars Electronica Festival.

The Departments of **Time-Based and Interactive Media Arts**, **Time-Based Media**, **the Media Design teacher training programme**, **Design and Technology**, **Fashion & Technology**, the PhD students and the participants of Sound Campus will present 60 more contributions at Hauptplatz 6. **The University of the Arts Berlin (UdK)**, in collaboration with the **Technische Universität Berlin**, presents its brand-new master programme Design & Computation at Splace (Hauptplatz Linz). At Hauptplatz 8 on the opposite side, 24 more universities and educational institutions gather in the rooms of the University of Art and Design Linz, transforming the university campus into the great **Ars Electronica Festival Campus**. Guest institutions include Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität Linz (AT); Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture (FI); ArTeC Graduate School of Research (FR); London College of Communication / University of the Arts London (UK); Universidad Austral de Chile (CL); University of Nova Gorica School of Arts (SI); Bauhaus University Weimar (DE); Art & Technology Studies Department of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (US); Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences (AT); Faculty of Design, University of Applied Sciences Berlin — School of Culture and Design, Department of Communication Design (DE); Birmingham School of Architecture and Design, Birmingham City University (UK); Masaryk University, Faculty of Arts (CZ); Brno University of Technology, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Communication (CZ); University of Applied Sciences Hagenberg Upper Austria (AT); Musrara the Naggar School of Art and Society (IL); Studio2, University of Innsbruck (AT); Design for Performance and Interaction, Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London (UK); CINETic, National University of Theatre and Film (RO); MAG (Media Art Globale), Festival by connected Art Platform, Korea National University of Arts | K-ARTS (KR); Center for Technology and Art, National Tsing Hua University — NTHU, Vilnius Academy of Arts (LT); MENE (LT); INSTITUTIO MEDIA (LT); Yasuaki Kakehi Lab., University of Tokyo (JP).

Opening hours:

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|----------------|---------------|
| 6 September | 18:00 – 20:00 |
| 7-10 September | 11:00 – 20:00 |
| 11 September | 11:00 – 18:00 |

For a few days, Linz and its main square will be an international art and science hub, especially for digital media art: In addition to the University of Art and Design, the rooms of the LandeskulturGmbH at OK Zentrum will host a large retrospective exhibition on the university professors Christa Sommerer und Laurent Mignonneau, titled **'The Artwork as a Living System'** (until 26.02.2023).

At Ursulinenhof, the Oberösterreichischer Kunstverein (Upper Austrian Art Association) presents S()fia Braga, a former student of Interface Cultures at the University of Art and Design Linz, in the joint exhibition **'Alpha State'** with Christiane Peschek.

Press conference:

6 September, 11:30, Glashörsaal Hauptplatz 6, 5. floor

Eröffnung/Opening:

6 September, 18:00, Hauptplatz 6, inner courtyard / Soundcampus

Öffnungszeiten Ausstellungen / opening hours exhibitions:

7.9.–10.9.2022, 11:00-20:00; 11.9., 11:00-18:00

Opening hours Soundcampus (Hauptplatz 6, inner courtyard)

6.9.–8.9., 19:00-22:00

Addresses:

Hauptplatz 6, 4020 Linz

Hauptplatz 8, 4020 Linz

Von schwarzen Schwänen / Of Black Swans...

When I try to find an image for our world, I fail because of reality. However, this is not due to a lack of images, because they are surrounding us en masse, haunting us. They depict not only our reality, but they project what seems to be our desires.

Escape from predefining and predefined imageries seems impossible, visualizing the world independently is difficult.

Having to look at the world in a different way, being able to re-think it, means that not only do we need to cast aside images which no longer correspond to our concept of a world-creating force. Rather, we must try to think the impossible. But how is it possible to think the unthinkable, to envision the inconceivable?

Von schwarzen Schwänen... is this year's title for the university's contributions to the Ars Electronica Festival 2022. Black swans, especially in the plural, are a metaphor alluding to a multiplicity of unthinkable concepts which are entwined with each other in improbability, hinting at something we are not prepared for. Allegedly, the black swan was discovered by a Dutch researcher couple in Australia. Due to the small number of specimens, it is considered an exceptional phenomenon. For a long time, it had been unimaginable that swans can be black at all, just as we still do not know if there are any pink pigeons¹. But they do exist: seemingly unthinkable moments and appearances, the SARS-CoV-2 – uncontrollable for such a long time – being one of them. But long before the world recognised and defined this novel disease, the black swan metaphor used by financial economists and crisis managers had already been on everyone's lips. Financial crisis and risk management, wealth accumulation and the profit orientation of neo-liberal society have embraced the black swan metaphor. This embrace is now frozen in a fever, a symbol of the fear of loss fuelled by the sheer inability to predict the future – be it COVID-19, war or the climate crisis.

However, when we at the University of Art and Design Linz speak '*Von schwarzen Schwänen...*' – considering the use of German and the ellipsis – we want to make it clear that we dedicate ourselves to the thought experiment of envisioning the impossible with the utmost openness. Our ambition is courageous, indecent and self-determined. It is meant to inspire others to do the same. The metaphor of the black swan stands for an open way of thinking without fear, for co-operation and solidarity, for challenging the current images of our world together, including every kind of minority and reacting to discriminating worldviews in a thoughtful manner. It is no coincidence that envisioning the unthinkable has originated with young people at the Kunstunicampus (university campus). This campus becoming an international hub with two dozen universities and educational institutions participating for the first time is a truly remarkable thing. In the spirit of Hannah Arendt, we should mention that artists believe in the world and understand the world-creating power of images in their own special ways because because they cannot afford to be alienated from the world.

You can recognise this idea of playing with images and metaphors in the key visual of this year's Kunstunicampus CI. It plays with dimensions, with a two-dimensional sheet of paper turning into a three-dimensional swan. But at the very same moment, it falls apart, only single pieces becoming recognisable when you leave a specific point of view. The swan becomes a memory. A memory of something we cannot even guess.

Von schwarzen Schwänen.../Of Black Swans... or pink ones, folded or in individual parts, recognisable or not – they will be the topic of our conversation. We will try to create other images and metaphors telling us about our world. Because: ‘Transference, the sensual quality of a metaphor, or in other words, “using the animate for the inanimate” (Aristotle) can undo the (totalitarian threat of) detachment of thought from reality and experience. (Marie Luise Knott, loosely translated).

Manuela Naveau

Initiator of the Kunstunicampus of the Ars Electronica Festival and professor at the Department of Interface Cultures of the University of Art and Design Linz.
