

AR application honored

## **CultTech x Ars Electronica Award 2024 for “Escape Fake”**

**(Linz/Vienna, November 6, 2024) This year's winners of the CultTech x Ars Electronica Award were honored yesterday, November 5, 2024, at the inaugural CultTech Summit in Vienna – a two-day event for leading personalities at the intersection of art, technology and business. For their innovative AR game *Escape Fake*, the Polycular collective receives €10,000 in prize money and long-term mentoring for the further development of the project. One honorary mention was also awarded.**

<https://ars.electronica.art/festival/en/culttech/>  
<http://culttechsummit.com/>

The CultTech x Ars Electronica Award recognizes projects and ideas that embrace digital transformation in the cultural and creative industries and promote sustainable technological developments. With this award, the CultTech Association and Ars Electronica honor initiatives that actively contribute to the accessibility of culture, promote inclusion, and demonstrate how the cultural scene can drive positive change.

### **Open Call: 147 submissions from 40 countries**

The open call for the CultTech x Ars Electronica Award 2024 received 147 submissions from 40 countries. Individuals, collectives and organizations with creative projects and business ideas were eligible to apply.

The jury – consisting of entrepreneur and artist Veronica D'Souza (DK), CultTech Association President Dmitry Aksenov (RU) and Ars Electronica Artistic Director Gerfried Stocker (AT) – was impressed by the diversity of social, ecological and community-oriented projects with high technological standards.

**Further inquiries**

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## **Embracing the Truth: Prize Winners 2024**

This year's award-winning projects deal with the complex distinction between reality and deception, social barriers, empathy and connectedness, as well as truth and sensitivity.

The main prize, endowed with €10,000, is awarded to the AR game *Escape Fake* by the collective Polycular – Irina Paraschivoiu (RO), Thomas Layer-Wagner (AT), Benjamin Arzt (AT), Julian Watzinger (AT) and Tobias Hoffmann (DE). The immersive game world empowers young people and their educators to debunk fake news and learn counter-strategies. In addition to the prize money, the winners will receive access to special CultTech mentoring for tech initiatives in the cultural scene.

*Embracing Places* by Margherita Landi (IT) and Agnese Lanza (IT) has been awarded a honorary mention. The project asks how immersive technology can build historical, cultural, emotional, social and geographical bridges by making gentle gestures – such as a hug – tangible in a 360° virtual reality setting in different places.

The official award ceremony took place on November 5, 2024 as part of the two-day CultTech Summit at MuseumsQuartier in Vienna.

## **About the CultTech Association**

The CultTech Association is a European non-profit organization dedicated to the intersection of culture (Cult) and technology (Tech). CultTechs aim is to establish a global platform for entrepreneurs and initiatives that embrace the transformative power of technology in the creative industries.

In addition to the CultTech x Ars Electronica Award, collaborations are being implemented with other cultural institutions, including the Salzburg Festival, Klangforum Wien and Viva Technology.

*The CultTech x Ars Electronica Award is a collaborative project between the CultTech Association and Ars Electronica.*

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## CultTech x Ars Electronica Award 2024 – Main Prize

*Award for Social Impact Projects in Culture and Technology*

### **Escape Fake**

Polycular – Irina Paraschivoiu (RO), Thomas Layer-Wagner (AT), Benjamin Arzt (AT), Julian Watzinger (AT), Tobias Hoffmann (DE)

<https://escapefake.org/>

*Escape Fake* is an immersive augmented reality game that uses an escape room format to promote critical thinking and media literacy in children and young people. In the game, young participants work with a virtual guide (a quantum reality hacker) and solve puzzles to identify fake news in time and refute disinformation. With exciting game tasks, *Escape Fake* combines digital storytelling, experience-oriented learning and media art via an app to train key skills for dealing with the digital world.

*Escape Fake* has developed into a comprehensive ecosystem that includes a toolkit for school classes, an online course for educators, and exhibition materials under the title Museum of Fake, in addition to the game.

*Escape Fake* is being honored with the 2024 CultTech x Ars Electronica Award for its efforts to use the immersive qualities of games and AR to promote critical thinking in the use of online media.

### **Credits**

Escape Fake is co-funded by the European Union through the Creative Europe Programme and by the European Media and Information Fund managed by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

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## CultTech x Ars Electronica Award 2024 – Honorary Mention

*Award for Social Impact Projects in Culture and Technology*

### **Embracing Places**

Margherita Landi (IT), Agnese Lanza (IT)

[www.landilanza.com](http://www.landilanza.com)

*Embracing Places* is a VR application that explores how affection, solidarity, empathy, cohesion and appreciation of cultural heritage can become a shared experience. Immersive technology and the universal gesture of a hug are the key to connecting communities and cultural spaces.

Participants experience a 360° virtual reality environment and, thanks to a VR headset, enter important places in small Italian towns. Several people can be seen holding each other in their arms, inviting "guests" to mirror their movements and engage in the intimate situation. Viewers without headsets witness the synchronized movements: A live performance is created that blurs the boundaries between the virtual and physical worlds.

The participatory project creates site-specific, community-oriented artworks and a link between human relationships and new technology.

### **Credits**

A project by Margherita Landi and Agnese Lanza

Co-design: Massimo Bevilacqua

VR concept and direction: Margherita Landi

Post-production: Sasan Bahadorinejad and Cosimo Lombardelli

Production Siena Area: Giardino Chiuso (Italy)

*with the contribution of* MiC (Ministry of Italian Culture) PNRR funding of European Union– Next Generation EU

Partners: Imaginarius – Festival Internacional de Teatro de Rua (Portugal)

In collaboration with GOLD Enterprise and DIDA (Department of Architecture, University of Florence)

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