

New Record:

Ars Electronica 2025 draws more than 122,000 visits

Just five days and countless encounters later, Ars Electronica 2025 has already come to a close. “To conclude our final appearance at POSTCITY with a record of over 122,000 visits feels almost too good to be true,” says Gerfried Stocker, Artistic Director of Ars Electronica, delighted as he reflects on this year’s edition.

“A total of 1,472 artists, scientists, and activists from 83 countries contributed to the Ars Electronica 2025 program,” adds Veronika Liebl, Managing Director of the Ars Electronica Festival, expressing her gratitude for the widespread participation. “51 co-curators, 398 staff members, and 440 cooperation partners made it possible to showcase 379 exhibits and carry out 684 individual program items over the past five days.” Additionally, 294 media representatives from 29 countries registered for the festival.

Peak Attendance at Events and Over the Weekend

In addition to the major exhibitions at Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz, the University of Arts Linz, and POSTCITY, it was the concerts and performances of the highest caliber that significantly shaped the festival’s unique atmosphere. “The largest crowds gathered for the Opening in and around St. Mary’s Cathedral, the Big Concert Night, the Nightline in POST-CITY’s train hall, and the performances in the Ars Electronica Center’s Deep Space 8K,” says Christl Baur, Head of the Ars Electronica Festival. POSTCITY itself was stormed by visitors on Saturday.

Festival Opening

More than 2,500 visitors turned this year’s Opening into a spectacular celebration. Highlights of the evening included the jointly sung and signed European Anthem, performed

by soprano Erika Colon, the sign language choir of the Urfahr-St. Josef parish, and the Company of Music conducted by Johannes Hiemetsberger; percussion sessions by Christoph Sietzen and MOTUS; and excerpts from the *Walzersymphonie* (Waltz Symphony)—composed by students from Vienna, Salzburg, Munich, and Zurich using an AI system developed by the Ars Electronica Futurelab, and performed by the Bruckner Orchestra Linz.

Prix Ars Electronica Award Ceremony

The ceremonial presentation of the Golden Nicas of the Prix Ars Electronica—which this year received nearly 4,000 submissions from almost 100 countries—as well as additional prizes awarded by the EU Commission and the Austrian Foreign Ministry, once again took place at the Design Center Linz. Among the attendees were Andreas Babler (Vice Chancellor of the Republic of Austria and Federal Minister for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media, and Sport), Sepp Schellhorn (State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria), Thomas Stelzer (Governor of Upper Austria), Dietmar Prammer (Mayor of the City of Linz), and Doris Lang-Mayerhofer (City Councilor of Linz for Culture, Tourism, and the Creative Economy). Wolfgang Hattmannstorfer (Federal Minister for Economy, Energy, and Tourism) sent his greetings via video message.

A Big Concert Night

Eighty years after the end of World War II, this year's Big Concert Night told a powerful story about art as resistance. The program featured Viktor Ullmann's chamber opera *The Emperor of Atlantis*. Dennis Russell Davies conducted the Filharmonie Brno, with David Bösch of the Landestheater Linz directing the stage production, and Cori O'Lan providing stirring visualizations. The concert was sold out.

Nightline

Immediately following the Big Concert Night, the Nightline transformed POSTCITY's train hall into a pulsating party zone. Leading figures from the Swiss club scene and Catalan artist Maria Arnal kept more than 1,600 visitors dancing and celebrating until 4 a.m.

Inspiring Futurelab Night

The completely sold-out Futurelab Night was also a highlight for many festivalgoers. Inside Deep Space 8K, they experienced captivating performances and presentations centered

around current projects by the researchers, developers, and artists of the Ars Electronica Futurelab.

New Formats and Focus Areas

Like every Ars Electronica edition, this year's festival once again tested new formats. A particular success was the introduction of "Spotlight Tours" in the festival's central exhibitions. Offered for the first time, these guided sessions provided curatorial insights and highlighted projects every 15 minutes, led by trained info guides.

"We deliberately wanted to offer our visitors the lowest possible barrier to access—no registration, no extra ticket," says Veronika Liebl.

A new thematic focus on theater and digital media also emerged in the program. A range of conferences and productions provided both experts and laypeople with fascinating insights into ongoing experiments involving artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality. "Interest in the theater pieces and performances was especially high—almost all of them were sold out," says Christl Baur.

The Ars Electronica Ecosystem on Display

For the first time, Ars Electronica also presented itself as an ecosystem. In a dedicated exhibition area, visitors—as well as current and potential partners—could explore the various operational divisions beyond the Festival and the Museum, learning about their activities, contributions, and goals. Directly adjacent, the teams from Ars Electronica Futurelab and Ars Electronica Solutions offered insights into their ongoing projects.

Crowd Magnet: Deep Space 8K

Deep Space 8K once again attracted large audiences. A particular highlight was the appearance of curators from the National Gallery London and the National Gallery of Art Washington, who provided exclusive insights into their renowned collections.

The "Deep Stage" program, featuring numerous performances blending dance, music, and media art, resonated strongly with audiences, as did the immersive concert *Drift in Time*. Another standout was *Cultural Astronomy*—a stunning journey through some of the world's most famous cultural heritage sites, exploring their cultural and mythical connections to the stars. (This program remains available at the Ars Electronica Center.) In total, over 7,100 visitors attended Deep Space 8K events during the five-day festival.

Support from Linz and Around the World

“440 event, cooperation, and project partners, as well as sponsors and funding bodies, made this year’s Ars Electronica possible,” says Markus Jandl, Commercial Director of Ars Electronica, expressing heartfelt thanks to all involved.

“That we receive such broad support not only underscores the relevance of our themes and mission, but also reflects what Ars Electronica truly stands for: a collaborative spirit rooted in inspiration and mutual respect, reaching across borders, (sub-)cultures, generations, disciplines, and genres,” adds Gerfried Stocker.

A Final Farewell to POSTCITY

“POSTCITY hosted eight editions of the Ars Electronica Festival since 2015—and every single one was something special,” recalls Veronika Liebl. “No other venue has shaped the festival and its evolution as profoundly. We owe a huge thank-you to Österreichische Post AG for letting us use this unique space so many times and experiment so freely within it.”

But as always, when one era ends, the next exciting chapter begins.

One thing is certain despite the uncertainty:

The Ars Electronica Festival 2026 will take place in Linz from September 9–13 – the exact location will be announced soon!

Dietmar Prammer

Mayor of the City of Linz and Owner Representative of Ars Electronica

"1,472 artists, scientists, and activists from 83 countries contributed to this year's Ars Electronica. All of them are people who invest their creativity, time, and energy into building a better future for all of us. They presented artworks, showcased research projects, gave lectures, offered workshops and guided tours – and thus created that unique and inspiring atmosphere that makes Ars Electronica so special. 122,000 visits underscore the strong response to this extraordinary festival."

Doris Lang-Mayerhofer

City Councillor for Culture and Chair of the Ars Electronica Advisory Board

"Several museums and universities, a cathedral, an artists' residence, an art-house cinema, numerous galleries, and of course POSTCITY—the mere fact that nearly all art and cultural institutions of the city and state, as well as the independent scene, private associations, and the Diocese of Linz participated in this Ars Electronica shows the high regard in which this globally renowned festival is held even locally. The result of this unique collaboration was an inspiring state of exception, palpable not only at the festival venues themselves but throughout the city center."

Stefan Koch

Rector of Johannes Kepler University Linz

"The Ars Electronica Festival 2025 once again demonstrated that science and art can provide vital impulses for addressing global challenges sustainably. Selected Art & Science projects from Johannes Kepler University Linz impressively showcased in POSTCITY what happens when research, artistic mediation, and innovation intersect. For us as a university, it was again an excellent opportunity to present our research to a broad audience and to engage with interested citizens. This kind of dialogue is essential for creating shared perspectives for a more sustainable future."

Brigitte Hütter

Rector of the University of Arts Linz

"Ars Electronica is the annual international benchmark for innovative media art. With the Campus format, the University of Arts Linz has, for more than two decades, served as a platform for young artists and partner universities during these remarkable days. What stands out most in 2025 is how the interactive sliding door installation Alles.Immer.Offen on Linz's main square sparked lively encounters and how vibrant the exchange was with many artists, scientists, and visitors from around the world."

Martin Rummel

Rector of Anton Bruckner University

"We are very pleased to have been a cooperation partner of Ars Electronica for the tenth time. With our format Sonic Saturday, we explored the theme PANIC—yes/no from musical perspectives and put listening at the center in times of multiple crises. 80 artists from 30 countries, selected from 166 submissions via an open call, designed the sound spaces 'Listening Room' and 'Medium Sonorum,' bringing electroacoustic textures and spatial sound to life. Collaborations with, among others, C-LAB Taiwan and the Mexican Centre for Music and Sonic Arts underscore the international reach of the Bruckner University and our commitment to promoting cultural exchange and social participation through art."

Stefanie Lindstaedt

Founding President of IT:U

"This year, IT:U presented itself in a new and innovative way—with the IT:U Pop-Up Store directly on Linz's main square. Our goal was to bring artificial intelligence and its potential directly to where people are. This dialogue and exchange were a great success and clearly demonstrated how important it is to understand AI together in order to shape it meaningfully and responsibly. The Social::Media::Worlds exhibition in the 'create your world' area in POSTCITY focused on how our collective online presence generates vast amounts of data. This data opens unprecedented insights into fields such as disaster management, epidemiology, or the spread of disinformation. Science is not an end in itself—it serves society. Communicating this message was a central concern for us. The Ars Electronica Festival itself is a symbol of international collaboration and innovation. It is a place where societal challenges are addressed and solutions developed—and that is exactly what makes this festival so unique."

Jürgen Hagler

Professor of Computer Animation and Animation Studies at FH Upper Austria,
Campus Hagenberg

"The Ars Electronica Animation Festival, organized in cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria (FH OÖ), once again placed a strong focus on animation art at the Ars Electronica Center. Twelve screening programs were presented, including highlights from the Prix Ars Electronica category New Animation Art. The Expanded Conference on Animation and Interactive Art, jointly hosted by FH OÖ and Ars Electronica, offered 40 presentations over three days on topics such as expanded animation, interactive experiences, creative AI, and hybrid spaces. The conference was accompanied by the Expanded Play exhibition at the Atelierhaus Salzamt, featuring 13 media installations by students and partner institutions."

Hemma Schmutz

Artistic Director, Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz

"The collaboration with the Ars Electronica Festival is a valuable opportunity for the Lentos Kunstmuseum to contribute to the presence of international media art in Linz. This year's Prix Ars Electronica exhibition powerfully demonstrated how the awarded artists tackle current questions of power, change, and the future, translating them into compelling imagery and installations. The great interest shown by the public underscores the urgency and relevance of these themes in our society."

Alfred Weidinger

Scientific Director, OÖ Landes-Kultur GmbH / Francisco Carolinum Linz

"The partnership between Ars Electronica and the Francisco Carolinum continues to grow in depth and visibility. The thematic overlaps in our programs demonstrate how fruitful the interplay of art, technology, and society is in Linz. With the 2025 edition, we are consistently advancing this partnership: through joint appearances, curatorial exchanges, and projects that combine international visibility with regional roots. This creates tangible added value for an audience that wants to experience artistic innovation, critical reflection, and digital culture in their mutual impact."

Johanna Möslinger

Interim Artistic Director, LIVA

"This year, the Ars Electronica Festival was also a guest of the International Bruckner Festival Linz, with its opening in St. Mary's Cathedral and the Big Concert Night in the POSTCITY train hall. And for the first time in a long while, there was a direct artistic exchange as part of the Linz Klangwolke 25 URBAN PULSE. I am confident that this has laid a good foundation for further fruitful collaboration. All parties are sure to benefit from such an intense mutual exchange."

Dennis Russell Davies

Artistic Director and Chief Conductor, Filharmonie Brno

"I am extremely grateful to the Ars Electronica Festival, the Filharmonie Brno, the Landestheater Linz, and the Universität Wien für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, for giving all of us—me, my fellow performers and our audiences—the opportunity to recreate a masterpiece born in a time of persecution, brutality, and terror, a work which has sent all of us a strong message of hope and love as we seek to navigate the threats to our own societies and the world around us. Viktor Ullmann's The Kaiser Von Atlantis glowed and resonated on our stage, honoring the memories of the artists who created it while challenging all of us to live up to their example."

Norbert Trawöger

Co-Curator of the Ars Electronica Opening

"The Ars Electronica Opening once again manifested what is possible in this city. A stroke of luck that can happen in this form only in Linz—when the limitless is dared together. Sounds from different origins and eras, performed by fabulous musicians and sound collectives, brought countless people from the city and the world together in and around Austria's largest church space. What a joy—one that had already been announced during the prologue on Cathedral Square and the jointly made visible and audible Ode to Joy."

Roland Geyer

Artistic Director, Johann Strauss 2025 Vienna

"With the commissioned project Walzersymphonie and the cooperation with Ars Electronica during the opening in Linz Cathedral on September 3rd, Johann Strauss 2025 Vienna has set another visionary milestone in reimagining the music of Johann Strauss. Students from Vienna, Salzburg, Munich, and Zurich demonstrated how inspiring the dialogue between tradition and innovation can be. We are particularly looking forward to the world premiere in Vienna (November 27), when the symphony developed by young composers and the AI software Ricercar will meet Roland Neuwirth's Walzersymphonie—an exciting musical encounter between two creative approaches, both engaging with the legacy of Johann Strauss in their own ways."

Clemens Pichler

Dommeister, St. Mary's Cathedral

"We are very pleased that the St. Mary's Cathedral has been one of the venues of the Ars Electronica Festival for many years, and that this year it was able to host the grand Opening for the second time. As the largest church in Austria, with its neo-Gothic architecture, it is not only an impressive spiritual site but also a unique space for encounters with art and culture. Thanks to comprehensive digitization efforts in recent years—from innovative educational stations to virtual experiences—the St. Mary's Cathedral itself builds a bridge between past and future. The Ars Electronica Festival represents not only technological innovation and artistic engagement with the latest achievements in science and research. It also addresses the profound existential questions of our time: Should humans do everything they are capable of? What ethical principles and societal guidelines should accompany technological development? These are questions that touch not only on philosophy but also on deeply religious dimensions. The dialogue between innovation, responsibility, and humanity finds a dignified and inspiring setting within the sacred space of the St. Mary's Cathedral."