

Projects, initiatives, and alliances between Linz, Tokyo, Wollongong, and Silicon Valley:

In 2019, Ars Electronica is turning 40 and is launching a whole series of new initiatives

(Linz, February 4, 2019) On September 18, 1979, the very first small but groundbreaking "Festival for Art, Technology and Society" began in Linz. Today, four decades later, Ars Electronica is one of the world's largest and most important platforms for media art, ideas for the future, and innovation—and it's in demand as never before. "The digital revolution has left no stone unturned and has changed our lives from the ground up," says Gerfried Stocker, artistic director of Ars Electronica: "And although it's strange to say this after 40 years, that was just the beginning." Because although digitization has touched all areas of our lives, it has above all simplified and accelerated existing processes in our industrialized world. "What's coming now is something completely different," says Gerfried Stocker, looking ahead: "We are on the threshold of a time when thinking and decision-making will be digitized. Through the use of artificial intelligence, the digital will become truly independent for the first time." So it will not become any quieter at the intersection of art, technology, and society. On the contrary: "Revolutionary developments are in the offing that will greatly engage all of us in the coming years," Gerfried Stocker is convinced and adds: "Our society has never been as challenged as it is today to play an active role in shaping the future. Initiating the necessary discourse for this is a core competence of Ars Electronica, which is therefore more relevant and important than ever before".

Ars Electronica is initiating a series of innovations ...

"With a new major permanent exhibition at the Ars Electronica Center, a new Prix category, a new Europe-wide residency program, and a new European festival, we're going to be intensively involved with the game changer AI with immediate effect," says Gerfried Stocker: "In addition, we will in future be announcing the Prix Ars Electronica in the 'u19 - CREATE YOUR WORLD' section in two categories for different age groups, working together with renowned personalities from the fields of art and science to build up research institutes on concrete issues relating to the future, raising our year-round presence in Japan to a new level, and launching new long-term initiatives in Australia and Silicon Valley in the USA."

... and is remaining true to its original philosophy

With all these innovations, Ars Electronica is remaining true to the timeless philosophy that has brought it worldwide success over the past four decades: "We will continue to guide, question, and help shape technology-driven progress with exactly the same attitude and exactly the same way of thinking as before. And we will continue to be the people who take the first steps and explore new territory—which does not mean that we know everything better, but that we may also be the first to stumble or get lost. But it is precisely in this searching and exploring that art

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and science fulfill their entire potential. They show us where we are going as a society, they present us with uncomfortable questions, and suggest different options."

A new permanent exhibition, new temporary exhibitions, new labs—the Ars Electronica Center Linz is reinventing itself

Four million euros will be invested in the Museum of the Future this year—2.5 million euros of which will come from the city of Linz, 1.5 million euros from Ars Electronica itself. "In the first half of the year, we will be building a completely new permanent exhibition that will focus on artificial intelligence," says Gerfried Stocker. "Given the scale and complexity of this technology, Ars Electronica's educational mission is to give everyone a basic idea of what AI is and how it functions." This is particularly important for Linz, because: "It is precisely because Linz, and Upper Austria in general—with the Johannes Kepler University Linz (JKU), the Hagenberg University of Applied Sciences, and the many regional high-tech companies— is very well positioned in terms of future technologies that AI applications will very soon make their presence felt in this region on a large scale," says Gerfried Stocker. The entire show will be conceived as a juxtaposition of human and machine intelligence. Interactive stations will ask how humans and how machines learn, think and decide? And last but not least, how do we humans feel? These scenarios are embedded in a "GeoSphere" dedicated to the Anthropocene. The focus is on the world that we as humans change and shape.

In parallel to the permanent exhibition in the third underground level, the first underground level of the Ars Electronica Center will also be redesigned. Here, at the very interface between the new permanent exhibition, the Deep Space above it, and the temporary exhibitions, completely redesigned labs will be set up. "These labs will no longer be just a space, but a new form of mediation that will offer our visitors great opportunities to actively work through topics together and bring in their own ideas and visions into play," says Gerfried Stocker.

New categories—The Prix Ars Electronica will in future be dedicated to the connection between AI life art and the search for a youthful revolutionary spirit.

The Prix Ars Electronica has been announced worldwide since 1987 and is considered to be the most traditional and prestigious prize in the field of media art. In 2019, the competition will be undergoing fundamental innovations.

With the new "AI & Life Art" category, Ars Electronica is now looking for projects and works of art that revolve around machine learning, deep learning, or other research fields and applications of artificial intelligence on the one hand but also projects that address questions and methods of bio- and gene technology or synthetic biology on the other. Gerfried Stocker is convinced that "the combination of AI systems and biotechnology will produce groundbreaking results in the coming years, which will have a massive impact on us as humans and our image of man": "It is therefore absolutely necessary to reflect on and discuss as broadly as possible the cultural and

social relevance as well as the ethical and political dimension of these technological and scientific developments.

In the "u19 - CREATE YOUR WORLD" section, the Prix Ars Electronica will be announced in two categories with immediate effect: one for "Young Creatives" under 14 and one for "Young Professionals" between 14 and 19. While the "Young Creatives" will be encouraged to playfully and creatively tinker with the future, the "Young Professionals" will be asked to come up with alternative ideas and concepts for the future that clearly stand out from the strategies of the current generation of decision-makers. "We are looking for young creative minds who rub up against the system, rebel against it, and propose other, more sustainable strategies for our future," summarizes Gerfried Stocker.

A new European festival for AI & music

For the first time this year, Ars Electronica will be hosting its own European festival for AI and music, whose program will include concerts for a broad audience as well as discursive formats for experts. Markus Poschner (Chief Conductor of the Bruckner Orchestra), Dennis Russell Davies (Chief Conductor of the Philharmonie Brno), and Volkmar Klien (Director of the Institute of Composition, Conducting, and Computer Music at Anton Bruckner Private University) will play a key role in the development of the program. Other partners include the Linz Brucknerhaus and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the world's largest cultural festival. Thematically, the festival will address the juxtaposition of human and machine creativity. The very first edition of the new festival will take place simultaneously with Ars Electronica from September 5 to 9, 2019, partly in the premises of the St. Florian Monastery and partly in POSTCITY.

New "Ars Electronica Initiatives" in Japan, Australia, and the USA

Japan is one of the most technology-oriented countries in the world and is a hotspot of the international media art scene. Ars Electronica has had a year-round presence in Japan for some time, specifically in "Tokyo Midtown" and "Knowledge Capital Osaka." Together with Hakuodo, NTT, NHK, Miraikan, Toyota, Honda, Osaka University, and many others, "Ars Electronica Japan" regularly organizes exhibitions, conferences, and workshops, hosts summits for future innovators, participates in think tanks, and conducts contract research. In addition to a whole range of different activities, "Ars Electronica Japan" is currently intensively involved in Japan's preparations for the 2020 Olympic Games and, together with NTT, is running the "Swarm Arena" research project, which is intended to open up a completely new experience of sporting events to the public. At the same time, an equally ambitious research project is underway with NHK, the focus of which is on the next generation of ultra-high definition TV sets. At the end of February, "Ars Electronica Japan" will also be hosting a festival edition of the "School of the Future" in Tokyo Midtown: The series of presentations and discussions, which has been running since 2017, is dedicated to topics of the future at the intersection of art, technology, and society and is now being staged for the first time in the form of a four-day festival.

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Ars Electronica is now also active throughout the year in Australia. Following a series of highly successful academic collaborations and educational programs in the past five years, such as with the Queensland University of Technology, “Ars Electronica Australia” is now involved in long-term programs with governments, cities, academic institutes, and companies, all of which have the goal of developing new forms of participation in order to involve more citizens in the discourse surrounding the future shape of our society. A major long-term project has begun with the City of Wollongong in New South Wales with some exciting announcements coming up in the very near future.

Ars Electronica's latest long-term initiative is a cooperation with The Tech, the largest science & education center in Silicon Valley, and the city of San Jose. At the heart of the cooperation are exhibitions and presentations of Ars Electronica projects and the European Commission's STARTS Initiative. The aim is to promote dialogue between the United States and the European Union and to introduce the European dimension into the discourse about a socially sustainable introduction of new technologies. In addition, partnerships are planned in the form of artist residencies in Silicon Valley, and, reciprocally, artists from the Bay Area, San Francisco, and Silicon Valley will take part in the Ars Electronica Festival in Linz. Together with Open Austria, Ars Electronica will also be making a contribution to this year's Burning Man Festival; Ars Electronica will also be cooperating with the “Philip Glass Center for the Arts, Science, and the Environment” in the future.

A new residency program for artists - the European ARTifical Intelligence Lab

Together with twelve renowned art and cultural institutions, Ars Electronica is launching the European ARTifical intelligence Lab. The Europe-wide initiative, scheduled to run for three years, is co-financed by the Creative Europe program of the European Union and offers artists the opportunity to reside at the Muntref Centro de Arte y Ciencia, the Laboratorio de Neurociencia de la Universidad Torquato Ditella in Buenos Aires, and the Ars Electronica Futurelab in Linz. In the course of a worldwide competition, which runs until February 17, it will be determined who can take up this residency. The competition is aimed at artists who wish to develop new artistic approaches at the interface of neuroscience and artificial intelligence. The results of the residency will then be presented at the Ars Electronica Festival in Linz and at the Muntref Centro de Arte y Ciencia in Buenos Aires.

New space programs—Europe-wide activities on the topics of space and earth observation

Together with twelve other partners, Ars Electronica is now working closely with ESA and the renowned Leiden University on the Europe-wide spaceEU project. By 2020, an exhibition on the subject of space is to be conceived and designed, which will then go on tour in ten European countries. An extensive workshop program will also be developed to accompany the show. spaceEU is financed by the EU's Horizon 2020 program for research and innovation and is intended to inspire young people to engage in careers in space travel and relevant research areas. Participation in

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spaceEU is the latest addition to Ars Electronica's now extensive activities in the field of space and astronautics. Since June 2016, the Ars Electronica Center in Linz has been the official European Space Education Resource Office (ESERO for short) in Austria, and only last year Ars Electronica Solutions designed the new ESA Visitor Center in Frascati near Rome and is currently in charge of the development of an AI system that will evaluate ESA satellite images in the future.

New research institutes—Artistic research on concrete future issues

The new research institutes will work unbureaucratically, in a focused and direct manner, building up Ars Electronica together with renowned scientists with immediate effect, thus bridging the gap between basic artistic research and concrete applications, for example, in business. The first research institute is being run by Ars Electronica together with Werner Jauk, a musician, sound artist, and extraordinary university professor at the Institute of Musicology at the University of Graz on the subject of auditory cultures. The (interim) results of these research institutes will be presented and discussed at each Ars Electronica Festival in the future.

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