



ARS ELECTRONICA 2020

Festival for Art, Technology & Society

9.–13. Sept.

A global journey mapping the ‘new’ world

In Kepler’s Gardens

at JKU Campus, Linz

and 120 other locations worldwide

In Kepler’s Gardens **A global journey mapping the ‘new’ world**

A journey in which it is not we who set out to travel, but our ideas and projects, which span a global network in which we gather to discuss what needs to be done.

Autonomy—Democracy
Ecology—Technology
Humanity
Uncertainty

(Linz, 6.7.2020) Ars Electronica 2020 will take place from September 9 to 13 – in Linz, of course, but not only there. “The corona crisis makes a Linz festival mile with 100,000 visitors from all over the world impossible,” says Gerfried Stocker, Ars Electronica’s Artistic Director. “For us as festival organizers, this can only mean working with a broad public to find new ways to deal with questions about our future, especially now, in the midst of this crisis. That’s why this fall, for the first time, we’re going to invite people to an Ars Electronica not only in Linz, but at 120 other venues worldwide and in parallel on the Net.” The decision to hold the festival again this year is intended to send a signal: “We cannot and will not accept that this pandemic forces us to simply abandon everything that constitutes our pluralistic society. Precisely because we are in the midst of this crisis, and precisely because all the rules of distance and hygiene are sensible and necessary, we cannot simply stay at home, but must actively and creatively try out new forms of dialogue and exchange.” In 2020, Ars Electronica will take place not despite Corona, but because of it.



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Ars Electronica 2020 is a journey mapping the “new” world and a journey through “Kepler’s Gardens,” which are located in Linz at the JKU Campus and at 120 other locations worldwide. In the course of this journey, we will discuss the important questions of our time, questions raised by the global corona crisis, and consider what we can and must do now. All the issues touched upon are marked by a general UNCERTAINTY and the question of how the crisis will shape and change us as individuals and as a society, us as HUMANITY. We will focus on two areas of tension in particular: AUTONOMY and DEMOCRACY as well as TECHNOLOGY and ECOLOGY.

ars.electronica.art/keplersgardens

In Kepler’s Gardens—a global journey mapping the “new” world

Hardly any other phrase has been used so often in recent months: “The world will be a different place after this crisis”—spoken prophetically, often as a glimmer of hope, more often as a threat. Is this true, and if so, what will the changes be? That question is the focus of this year’s Ars Electronica.

Following last year’s brilliant 40th anniversary festival, which brought more artists, exhibitors and international experts to Linz than ever before, this year Ars Electronica is going on a journey, or rather the festival itself is becoming a journey—a journey through “Kepler’s Gardens.” A journey through the networked biotopes and ecosystems in which people all over the world are working to develop and shape our future, and these days that means, above all, working to save our future. A journey to and with many committed communities that have already begun not only to think about the current problems, but to work on concrete ideas, actions and solutions. Places, initiatives and institutions where artists and scientists work together, challenge society and try out new alliances and forms of cooperation.

So “Kepler’s Gardens” is not only the name of the new festival venue in Linz, which will move from Postcity to the Kepler’s Gardens on JKU’s well-equipped campus, transforming its beautiful and extensive parks into an extraordinary festival site.

“Kepler’s Gardens” is also the metaphor for the festival’s organizing principle in a global lockdown: a festival that will not dive into the network and disappear there, but will emerge from the network and manifest itself in many places around the world, distributed and networked. Starting in Linz and working with partners from Ars Electronica’s extraordinarily large international network, developed over the course of 40 years, “real” events will take place in many locations, with “real” artists and scientists for “real” audiences, all of which will be networked into a festival from September 9 to 13. With this simultaneity and duality of local-physical and globally networked events, Ars Electronica will once again be an exciting experimental laboratory and prototype for next-level networking that will focus primarily on new forms and possibilities for the fusion and coexistence of analog and digital, real and virtual, physical and telematic proximity.

Last but not least, “Kepler’s Gardens” is also a clear commitment to science and a fact-based and responsible way of dealing with each other, a statement for science and art, not only as a way to fuel the economy, but as the basis for culture and civilization.



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Nothing seems more important at the moment than networking the oases and maintaining intensive intellectual, artistic, human contact, exchange and dialogue, standing up to the expanding desert that is feeding on fear, isolation, social segregation, loss of solidarity, and the social and economic discrimination so painfully visible in the current crisis.

This is and has always been one of the central tasks of art and culture, a task that can only be achieved in cooperation with science, technology and society.

Ars Electronica 2020—a picnic in Linz

The extensive parks and large new buildings on the JKU campus will be of particular benefit to Ars Electronica this year. They offer the best possible conditions for ensuring the necessary “physical distance” between visitors. In thematically oriented areas, visitors can sit down at a safe distance from one another and have the festival program served up to them, so to speak. On a total of three stages, the program will include lectures and presentations, performances and concerts. In the university buildings located around the park, conferences will be held and exhibitions shown, which this year can only be visited as part of guided tours.

Once again, an anchor of this year's festival will be “create your world.” Set in the midst of Linz's “Kepler's Garden,” it will present a spacious area as an inspiring and naturally corona-compatible playground for children and parents who like to experiment.

The “AIxMusic Festival” can also be experienced in “Kepler's Garden” at the JKU campus. This format, which was first held in 2019 in cooperation with the European Commission and turned out to be a great success, will be continued in 2020. It is entirely dedicated to the networking of the countless centers that are working on the applications and effects of AI research for the cultural sector and therefore taking on an important role in communication and dialogue between research and society. The Anton Bruckner Private University for Music, Drama and Dance will also contribute artistic projects and performances. This year, the “AIxMusic Festival” will be closely linked with the STARTS program and the presentation of “STARTS Prize 2020” winners.

Without a doubt, one of the festival's highlights will be the Big Concert Night, which, more than ever, will be influenced by the love of experimentation that is so characteristic of Markus Poschner and the Bruckner Orchestra Linz. “The genius loci Johannes Kepler would have been joyous. The festival will become a very special Harmonice Mundi, a global symbiosis of technology, art, and society. The magicians of Ars Electronica are unleashing a metamorphosis. The physical and mental gardens of Johannes Kepler University will become the epicenter of a wonderful global network. Oases of a creative and responsible understanding of technology will come together at a time of dramatic change,” said JKU Rector Meinhard Lukas.

In addition to the festival center on the JKU Campus, the festival will also take place in the city center of Linz.



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The CyberArts exhibition will take place as usual in the OK in the Upper Austrian culture quarter (OÖ Kulturquartier). A selection of the best media art works of 2020 will be presented and there will also be a focus on VALIE EXPORT. At this year's Prix Ars Electronica, the Linz-born artist was honored with a Golden Nica as a "Visionary Pioneer of Feminist Media Art"; the festival will present an account of her influential artistic and feminist life's work. There will be a "Special Lecture" at the OK as part of the Prix Ars Electronica Forum; Crossing Europe will show its own film program "Tribute VALIE EXPORT" and guided tours and lectures will be offered in the archive of the VALIE EXPORT Center in the Tobacco Factory. The Francisco Carolinum in the Upper Austrian Provincial Museum (Landesmuseum) will host the exhibition "VALIE EXPORT. COLLECTION CARE."

Young, unconventional and provocative, this year's campus format is presented at the University of Art and Design (Kunstuniversität). With the motto "THE WILD STATE," a team of around 50 teachers, artists and students is working intensively on developing various projects and exhibition formats. In addition to the traditional "Interface Cultures" exhibition, the program includes a large show with various international partner universities. There will also be a façade projection on the main square (Hauptplatz), a symposium entitled "Uncanny Friends," an Internet flea market, and a discussion and bring-your-own-art format. US artist Lynn Hershman Leeson, winner of a Prix Ars Electronica 2020 Distinction in the "Interactive Art+" category, will be contributing a keynote address. "This year's festival is both a challenge and an opportunity," explains Brigitte Hütter, Rector of the University of Art and Design. "In times of pandemic, many things have to be re-thought, but much more can also be tried out. Right now, as the motto implies, there are no limits on what you can think."

Of course the Ars Electronica Center, and especially Deep Space, will also be a central festival venue. As at the OK and the University of the Art and Design, guided tours will be offered here daily and must be booked in advance.

Ars Electronica 2020—a journey around the world

This time, however, Ars Electronica is not only taking place in Linz, but in 120 "Kepler's Gardens" around the globe. For the first time, the festival is putting itself to the test as a digital travel agency that brings visitors from all over the world to "gardens where art, technology and society intersect," which are as fascinating as they are inspiring. Destinations are in abundance; there are "Ars Electronica Gardens" in Barcelona (Institut Ramon Llull, Hangar, UOC—ISEA Barcelona, NewArtFoundation—BEEP Collection, OFFF Barcelona, Espronceda), in Brussels (BOZAR), in Tokyo (Japan Media Arts Festival), in Boston (MIT Media Lab), in Buenos Aires (National University of Tres de Febrero, Muntref Centro de Arte y Ciencia), in Seoul (K'ARTS Korea National University of Arts), in Basel (HeK Haus der elektronischen Künste), in Athens (Onassis Stegi), in Silicon Valley (Open Austria), in Johannesburg (Fakugesi Festival), in Los Angeles (UCLA), in Auckland (University of Auckland), in Vilnius (Vilnius Academy of Arts) and in Amsterdam (Waag). At all these locations between September 9 and 13, artists, scientists, developers, entrepreneurs and activists will be addressing the question of how the "new" world should look after—or with?—Corona.



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Ars Electronica 2020—on the Net

The Net is also a central venue at this year's Ars Electronica. This means not merely depicting or transmitting real events, but designing virtual events and programs as well as creating opportunities for exchange and interaction that conform to the laws of the Internet and the habits and preferences of the communities gathered here.

The festival website serves as a central directory of all local and virtual events, opening the gates and windows to the "Kepler's Gardens" around the globe. Structured according to themes, places, times, languages and formats, the entire Ars Electronica program is displayed here, and visitors can see and comment on daily streams—not only from Linz, but from many other "Kepler's Gardens" as well.

This website is closely interlinked with a number of social media platforms. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube will reflect the social dimension of the online festival and will act as pillars of this Ars Electronica even before the festival, but of course especially while it is underway. News, photos, videos and streams will be posted here, keynotes, prototypes, artworks and research projects will be reported and discussed.

Mozilla Hubs, which will be specially designed for the festival, will also be a separate "Kepler's Garden" in their own right. Together with its partners, Ars Electronica will open up a multitude of these virtual, three-dimensional spaces that anyone and everyone can explore together with like-minded people.