

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Ars Electronica 2005: Recap of a Very Successful Year

Rising attendance figures at the Museum of the Future, the expansion of the Ars Electronica Center, a State Prize for Multimedia and e-business as well as other awards, several guest appearances abroad and rave reviews for the 2005 Ars Electronica Festival's "Hybrid" theme were just a few of the highlights of the year just past.

2005 will go down as a time of remarkable achievements and developments boding well for the future. Regionally as well as on national and international levels, Ars Electronica has proven to be a winning player in the field of innovation.

"Throughout 2005, we've received strongly positive feedback confirming Ars Electronica's outstanding reputation as a partner in a wide variety of collaborative arrangements and joint ventures. We're particularly proud of the model character of many of our projects. This has manifested itself, on one hand, in the form of official honors such as the State Prize for Multimedia and e-business and the World Summit Award; on the other hand, there's also the leadership that this institution has been providing in pioneering projects like Wikimap, u19 freestyle computing and the visualization of Mahler's Second Symphony," said Ars Electronica Artistic Director Gerfried Stocker.

Linz Deputy Mayor Erich Watzl, chairman of the Ars Electronica Center's board of directors, was equally enthusiastic in commenting on the many positive developments: "Cooperation with R&D facilities and the private sector, exciting artworks and intellectual discourse on the highest level, collaborative projects with partners in Linz, the region and throughout

the world—Ars Electronica sets the standard at the nexus of culture, technology and society. Here, the emphasis is constantly on mediating the general public's encounter with the possibilities of modern technologies, and the visitors statistics for the past year once again attest to the great job this institution is doing.

Box Office Trends

With 72,010 visitors, the Ars Electronica Center – Museum of the Future recorded strong attendance growth for the third straight year. There were also positive developments evident across the board at the Ars Electronica Festival, which attracted 33,000 visitors including 532 accredited journalists from 35 countries. And then there were Ars Electronica's stints abroad—for instance, approximately 100,000 guests visited "Climax – The Highlight of Ars Electronica," a major exhibition at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts last year.

Museum: New Exhibits, Workshops, Initiatives and Events

The Museum of the Future was the venue of attractive offerings throughout 2005. In early September, a completely new exhibition lineup premiered in conjunction with the Ars Electronica Festival. In the spring, summer, fall and winter, new seasonal focal-point themes and features were worked out and presented, with the spectrum ranging from courses for kids and workshops to themed tours and offerings specially geared to the over-50 age group. In December, the exhibits were enhanced by the installation of a Simulation Lab and a Simulation Path.

Increase in Demand – Expansion of the Center - National and International Acclaim

Ever since 2004, we have witnessed a strong rise in demand for projects produced by Ars Electronica. One example is the above-mentioned exhibition at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts. Others include Austria's contribution to the 60th anniversary of the

United Nations as well as a module at ARCO 2005, the Spanish art fair—both were curated by Ars Electronica. AEC staffers were also responsible for the core of Austria's presence at last year's World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis. At the Siemens_artLab in Vienna, Ars Electronica orchestrated an exhibit about the individuals who have participated in Ars Electronica's Artist-in-Residence Program sponsored by Siemens.

WDR, Western Germany's public broadcasting station, kicked off its anniversary year in 2006 with an extraordinary multimedia event. Mahler's Second Symphony was collaboratively staged by the Cologne Philharmonic and the Ars Electronica Futurelab, an effort that raised the bar in the production of classical music to astounding new heights. The Ars Electronica Futurelab set out on this course with a production of Richard Wagner's "Rheingold" in cooperation with the Brucknerhaus Linz; this latest undertaking with the WDR thus represents its second major triumph in the classical music field.

Ars Electronica is also a sought-after partner for joint business ventures and R&D networks. Last spring, for example, the Ars Electronica Futurelab, the Johannes Kepler University of Linz and Siemens jointly present "Virtual Graffiti," an innovative communications technology. The premiere of the "Virtual *Millionenzimmer*" project commissioned by Vienna's Schönbrunn Palace caused a sensation throughout Austria. An automobile navigation system developed jointly by the Ars Electronica Futurelab and Siemens debuted at this year's IAA.

One of the most satisfying forms of acknowledgment of the high quality of the work being done at the Ars Electronica Futurelab was receiving the 2005 Austrian State Prize for Multimedia and e-business for "Gulliver's World." Moreover, with this project being singled out for recognition with a 2005 World Summit Award, it can rightfully claim a place among the world's best new media products. The "Humphrey" flight simulator was honored with the Adolf Loos Prize. Ars Electronica was also nominated for a Wired Rave Award as well as a World Technology Award, and the Ars Electronica-produced DVD "images4music" was nominated for the German Media Art Prize. Thomas Köner, whose work was showcased by

Ars Electronica at the ARCO international art fair, was the recipient of the 2005 ARCO Jury Prize.

And not the least important upshot of Ars Electronica's many achievements and honors was the decision reached in 2005 to expand both the Ars Electronica Center's physical plant and the scope of its activities.

Regionally, nationally, internationally – Watchword: Networking

The Ars Electronica Festival works together closely with regional artists, institutions and initiatives. In this connection, special acknowledgment is due to the co-organizers of the Ars Electronica Festival: the Brucknerhaus Linz, the O.K Center for Contemporary Art and the ORF – Austrian Broadcasting Company's Upper Austria Regional Studio. Plus, several artists and cultural initiatives from Linz and the Province of Upper Austria were new additions to the Ars Electronica coalition and made key contributions to the success of the 2005 Festival.

But by no means is collaboration with regional associates limited to the Festival season. The establishment of the new Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Digital Culture and Media Science can undoubtedly be characterized as a pioneering success of regional networking. Three Linz institutions—the University of Art, the Lentos Museum of Art and Ars Electronica—worked together to bring this new institute to the city.

Ars Electronica is an increasingly sought-after partner when it comes to organizing conferences in specialized scientific fields. For instance, in addition to the DOM Conference that was held in cooperation with Linz's University of Art for the third time, Ars Electronica also staged two additional specialty conferences: the "Man and Computer" conference in collaboration with Johannes Kepler University and "The Age of Simulation" produced jointly with FAS.research, a Vienna-based research facility. The Ars Electronica Center also hosted Linux Weeks in Upper Austria.

Ars Electronica's contribution to the City of Linz's "hotspot Linz" initiative is a project entitled "Wikimap Linz," an interactive city map that makes possible a new form of citizen involvement in virtual space. This pioneering effort is also serving as a model, awakening interest from Munich to Madrid.

High-ranking international delegations from Osaka, Japan, Taipei, Taiwan and Norrköping, Norway visited the Ars Electronica Center to learn more about how things are done there and the Linz institution's recipe for success.

Throughout the year, the Ars Electronica Center is involved in numerous cooperative arrangements designed to facilitate know-how transfer. AEC has participated in economic development initiatives such as TechnoLog, RIO (Regional Initiative Upper Austria), Girls Day and the design initiative of Clusterland Upper Austria. Ars Electronica has proven to be an active and open partner in its collaboration on such large-scale events as The Long Night of Videos, The Long Night of Research, and The Long Night of Museums.

Prix Ars Electronica: u19 as an Example Worthy of Emulation

Once again last year, the Prix Ars Electronica – International Competition for CyberArts confirmed its status as trendsetter in the international media art scene. There were 2,975 entries submitted from 71 countries to the 2005 Prix, with especially strong growth in the Computer Animation and Interactive Art categories. One very special reflection of the competition's success is the way that the "u19 freestyle computing" category has come to serve as a model worldwide. Similar u19-style competitions are now being held in Hungary and Taiwan.

The Outlook for 2006

Ars Electronica is carrying on the dynamism of 2005 in seamless fashion and numerous projects are already going full speed ahead. One major presentation was already staged on January 1st—the Cologne Philharmonic's New Year's Concert celebrating the WDR's 60th anniversary. The 2006 Prix Ars Electronica competition has been accepting entries since

January 10th and preparations are moving forward in high gear. Ars Electronica is designing the media installations for the "Sound of Europe" EU summit meeting in Salzburg January 26-28, 2006. They will be presented to the press on the afternoon of January 26th. And in early February, Ars Electronica will unveil "Digital Transit" and "Directions of Media Art – *Quo Vadis Medienkunst*," the media art focal point of Austria's presence at ARCO, one of the world's most important art fairs.

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