



PRESS INFORMATION

CLIMAX - STATEMENTS: Christine Schöpf

That the first computer visualization of the motion in space of a three-dimensional object—the arc described by a flying ball, for instance—is now widely regarded as the birth of computer animation is probably a matter of interest only to the chroniclers of such developments during the mid-20th century.

In our present age of visual communication, we experience the world that surrounds us, our everyday life, via imagery: orientation icons, e-government, advertising clips, lifestyle performances, music videos, scientific simulations, artistic explorations, cartoons, visual effects in Hollywood and Bollywood productions, mobile telephoning, organizational systems, gaming, exploration of the hemispheres and research into everyday life, GPS operating systems—we experience almost everything that describes our life via a world of images.

In the catalog that accompanied the first Ars Electronica Festival in 1979, computer pioneer Herbert W. Franke wrote:

“Up to now, technological progress has penetrated and pervaded society in quite a simple, impromptu way, so that debates about its disturbing side effects have amounted to confrontations with systems that are already solidly established. A better way to go about this would be to critically observe technological changes while they are still in the process of emerging and to channel them in the right direction.”

But have we in the meantime come to regard such standpoints vis-à-vis technological progress as outdated? And is this for the better or for the worse?

In 1987, the Ars Electronica Festival launched the Prix Ars Electronica as an international competition staged annually as a means of recognizing excellence in an array of cultural domains that have kept pace with the leading edge of technological development by experimenting with new forms of artistic expression, endowing them

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with new creative options and, seen from this perspective, making them possible. Here, visual design assumes great importance as an area of tremendous relevance to society as a whole. Nowadays, observing and evaluating products of visual communication have long since ceased to be a matter of listing the hardware and software utilized to generate them. These were the factors that certainly were significant in the '80s and '90s; now, we see images and stories on the basis of which we establish—and sometimes even caricature—our understanding of the world (if not of reality itself) and that, like other predecessor visual techniques such as photography, have always been legitimated on the basis of reality.

In other words, we deal with images and stories that describe our life and less so with the technologies connected with them.

The films being screened here—works representing the 18-year history of the Prix Ars Electronica—describe both: technological development as well as concomitantly developing examples of visual design, artistic scrutiny and experimentation, storytelling and creative approaches to dealing with the issues of the day by utilizing the means of the day.

The Selection Prix Ars Electronica 1987 to 2004 thus invites viewers to take a fascinating and impassioned journey through the better part of two decades of technological development, visual design, visualization of scientific phenomena, artistic R&D and storytelling with a wide array of aims and agendas.

On this journey, you'll experience the development of visual effects from Terminator 2 to the present day; of music videos of 2-D artifacts from John Fekner to Bjorg; of the simulation of sunlight all the way to the planet Mars; and of milestones of storytelling in advertising.

This is, in short, a journey through two decades of visual design from the immediate past to the upcoming future.

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