ARS ELECTRONICA

Ars Electronica / 2007 Recap

Speakers

Dr. Erich Watzl / Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, Deputy Mayor of the City of Linz

Curt Norbert Schorn / Financial Director of Ars Electronica Linz GmbH

Gerfried Stocker / Artistic Director of Ars Electronica Linz GmbH

2007: A Successful Year

Breaking ground for the new Ars Electronica Center and the museum's move to temporary quarters, the largest (art-in-architecture) project in the history of the Ars Electronica Futurelab, a record-setting performance by the Prix Ars Electronica, a new branch location in Vienna's Museumsquartier, a festival with a real flair for experimentation, and guest appearances in Gijon (Spain), London, Aarhus (Denmark), Shanghai, Singapore and Florence—2007 was one of the most successful chapters in the almost 30-year history of Ars Electronica. Plus, the official go-ahead for the new Ars Electronica Center means that the future has never looked brighter!

The New Ars Electronica Center

The new Ars Electronica Center has been under construction since March 1, 2007. The heating, plumbing and electrical infrastructure is currently being installed in the 3rd Underground Level; last week, crews laid the concrete for the ceiling of the future home of the Futurelab on the eastern end of the new plaza. Additional floors will be finished every two to three weeks, so that the building's exterior shell will be complete in May. At www.aec.at/neubau,you can follow the progress 'round the clock via webcam.

The new Ars Electronica Center will debut on January 1, 2009, right on time for the kick-off of the European Capital of Culture year. The "Museum of the Future" is being expanded by 6,500 m^2, space that will be dedicated to the presentation of innovative media art projects from all over the world as well as up-and-coming fields of science and technology: nano, bio, and neuro are the keywords designating these settings for exhibiting, experiencing and mediating encounters with high-tech.

The Museum on Graben

While the new Ars Electronica Center is taking shape on the north bank of the Danube, the Museum of the Future is occupying temporary quarters at Graben 15 in downtown Linz until October 13, 2008. With more than 56,000 visitors last year, attendance figures clearly surpassed projections (50,000). There was also a very positive response to the "construction site tours" conducted during the two-month move to the interim facility, which offered participants an

unaccustomed behind-the-scenes glimpse at the museum's operations. Three conferences brought experts in their respective fields to the AEC: YouthMediaCultures (March 23-24), Museum Online (June 28) and Science Communication (December 4) were designed to intensify cooperation with opinion leaders and government agencies and, in doing so, to more solidly establish Linz as a site for staging such events. A multi-month joint venture with the Gallery of the Province of Upper Austria and a similar undertaking still in progress with the Linz Castle Museum are part of a larger effort to expand regional networking and collaboration. LIWEST signed on in early 2007 as a new lead sponsor.

A Record-setting Performance – The Prix Ars Electronica

With 3,374 projects from 63 countries, the 2007 Prix Ars Electronica attracted the highest number of entries in its 21-year history. Of particular note were the many submissions to the Hybrid Art category that premiered last year. And there's good reason for this, according to Ars Electronica Artistic Director Gerfried Stocker: "We have to finally take leave of the notion that there's *one single* media art. We're already seeing enormous differentiation, featuring the emergence of separate genres and sub-genres that are interrelated only through their use of certain technical processes or apparatuses. 'Hybrid Art' is meant to showcase the work of artists who have long since ceased restricting themselves to the purview of a single category, and for whom transcending boundaries into spheres such as R&D, socio-political activism and pop-cultural pursuits has become a matter taken completely for granted." Incidentally: This is just one of numerous (current) developments well documented by the 37,542 cyberarts projects that make up the Prix Ars Electronica Archive.

Creatives worldwide still have until March 19, 2008 to enter this year's Prix Ars Electronica competition. Juries of international experts will convene April 17-20. As always, the Golden Nica statuettes will be presented to the winners in early September at a gala awards ceremony in the Brucknerhaus.

Inspired Experimentation – The Ars Electronica Festival

Video cameras monitoring what goes on in public spaces, biometric passports, gigantic data banks, trojans and, last but not least, online surveillance—the 2007 Ars Electronica Festival took these developments as a wake-up call to

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Montag, 25. Februar, 10 Uhr
Graben 15
A-4020 Linz

3

focus not on the future but on a dilemma that the Western world is facing right now: the status of the public and private spheres and the relationship between them. A total of 31,500 visitors, 530 artists and scientists, and 533 journalists from Austria and abroad attended a festival at which the joy of trying out new things was as great as it's been in years. The highpoint of the artistic and scientific experimentation was a control scenario that encompassed the entire city: the spy-plane flyover entitled "All of Linz." Unfortunately, it had to be postponed due to inclement weather, but that did nothing to diminish the enthusiasm of the many local participants. The "Second City" set up in Marienstraße downtown also got rave reviews from festivalgoers. "By staging Second City exclusively in public spaces, we succeeded in dealing with a highly controversial issues in an artistic way that made it transparent for the general public," Gerfried Stocker said. A very well-received event that kicked off the festival was a not-your-everyday form of cooperation between the art world and the judiciary: a conference sponsored by the Austrian Judges Association at which participants came to terms with fundamental rights in the digital world. Bottom line: a success culturally as well as from a tourism perspective. The Ars Electronica Festival, the Klangwolke (Cloud of Sound) and the Brucknerfest made September the best month of 2007 (67,308 overnight stays). The 2008 Ars Electronica Festival is set for September 4-9.

Success through Innovation – The Ars Electronica Futurelab

Staged on the very first day of 2007, the Ars Electronica Futurelab's visualization of Gustav Mahler's Symphony Nr. 2 in C minor was the absolute highlight of the WDR media network's 40th anniversary celebration in Cologne, Germany. And an interactive visualization of Igor Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring" in the Royal Festival Hall in London and in Aarhus, Denmark garnered more international headlines for the Linz media lab.

In 2007, the Ars Electronica Futurelab also installed the largest and most important project in its 11-year history. "Source.Code" is a work of art and practical infrastructure: an interactive visitors' guidance system custom-designed for the new headquarters complex that SAP Germany opened in March 2007 in Walldorf, Baden-Württemberg. Here, state-of-the-art technology blends with one of mankind's oldest navigational aids to formulate a media art statement that guides clients from the parking lot to the visitors' information center and gives them a feeling for SAP's areas of expertise and corporate

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4

philosophy while they're moving about the campus. Approximately 30 Futurelab staffers worked for almost two years to develop and implement "Source.Code."

In conjunction with REGplus, a structural program sponsored by Austria's Foundation for the Advancement of Research (FFG), the Futurelab has been working on behalf of small and mid-size regional companies. Within the framework of the "Transfer" module, the Ars Electronica Futurelab supported a variety of activities to promote professionalism and innovation on the part of small and mid-size regional companies through the design and implementation of custom-tailored solutions. The results benefit not only the companies involved but the whole small and mid-size sector of the regional economy. The receipt of the commission to carry out this module of the FFG's program to foster regional economic growth means that the Ars Electronica Linz GmbH has been endowed with official "Impulse Center" status.

net.culture.space Provides a Presence in Vienna

Global networking of information and knowledge is one of the key qualities of modern life. Since July 2007, net.culture.space in Vienna's quartier21/MQ has been serving as a showcase for works of media art that deal with this phenomena and its cultural and social consequences. This project launched by Ars Electronica and Telekom Austria provides an up-close-and-personal setting in which to directly experience the diversity and dynamism of contemporary media art. Inherent in this undertaking is an encounter with the exchange and development of ideas, concepts, and visions—not in the form of conventional exhibits, but by means of cyclically rotating interactive scenarios as well as in-depth discussions with the artists themselves. One of the absolute highlights in this vein was an appearance by Italian star photographer Oliviero Toscani. With more than 11,300 visitors to date, net.culture.space has taken only a few months to establish itself as the hot new attraction in Vienna's Museumsquartier. By the way: "The Secret Life Of ..." is net.culture.space's upcoming show; it runs March 19-May 6, 2008 and features the work of Linz media artist Christa Sommerer. For details, go to www.netculturespace.at.

A High-definition International Profile

Ars Electronica has continued to make quite a name for itself worldwide with a series of very well-received productions at prestigious venues abroad.

"The Rite of Spring" at the Royal Festival Hall in London

On the occasion of its reopening, the Royal Festival Hall staged a production of Igor Stravinsky's ballet "The Rite of Spring" June 26th and 27th. The three-dimensional setting for this performance was designed by Linz's Ars Electronica Futurelab and Viennese media artist Klaus Obermaier. Musical accompaniment was provided by the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Stravinsky's 1913 ballet does not tell a story in a conventional sense; instead, it depicts a ritual of human sacrifice in heathen times, whereby the sequence of dances reflects the individual elements of the ceremony. In the real-time visualization by Klaus Obermaier and the Ars Electronica Futurelab, the dynamics and structure of the music interactively transform the physical and virtual presence of the dancer and her avatars. The result is what might be termed a meta-choreography. Stereo cameras transpose dancer Julia Mach into a virtual, three-dimensional space. Temporal strata and uncommon perspectives overlay one another, engender duplication, and bring out completely new ways of looking at the human body and its sequences of movements. Musical motifs interactively influence and manipulate these 3D projections. In this work of art, the music functions as the point of departure and, simultaneously, the consummation of the choreography.

"Digital Art and Magic Moments" at the Shanghai eARTS Festival

The 1st Shanghai eARTS Festival on October 19-23 was the largest media art festival ever held in China. The featured event at the opening ceremony was the Futurelab's interactive visualization of a Chinese Kun opera. In conjunction with the festival, Ars Electronica also staged an exhibition at the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum, the largest facility of its kind in the world. "Digital Art and Magic Moments" utilized 3,000 m^2 of space to present 25 works by international artists as well as Ars Electronica Futurelab staffers. Attendance was incredible: approximately 100,000 visitors in only three weeks!

"Digital Art & Technology" at the Singapore Science Center

Ars Electronica brought "Digital Art & Technology" to the Singapore Science Center from November 9, 2007 to January 1, 2008. In classic Ars Electronica style, the installations let those partaking of them experience man-machine interaction that gets their bodies and senses into play. Designed for hand-on

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6

intervention and participation, the installations on display emancipate visitors from the role of passive observer and encourage them to take an active, direct approach to their interaction with new technologies and experiences in virtual spaces. In less than two months, more than 40,000 people came to see what the excitement was all about.

"Hybrid Moments" at the Florence Biennale

More than 2,500 works by 840 artists from 76 countries were on display December 1-9, 2007 at the Florence Biennale. This was the first time Ars Electronica was invited; the contribution consisted of seven works by international artists presented on 300 m^2 of exhibition space. And indeed, the show curated by Ars Electronica was one of the highlights of the 6th Florence Biennale.

"80+1" – Ars Electronica in the Capital of Culture Year 2009

80+1 – A Journey Around the World

A Joint Project of Ars Electronica and voestalpine
in conjunction with Linz 09

Inspired by Jules Verne's famed "Around the World in 80 Days," Ars Electronica and voestalpine will be sending Linz across the globe in 2009: virtually, on the world-spanning fiber optic cables and satellite hookups of our globalized Information Society. "80+1" is the title of this unusual journey around the world and into the future. There will be 20 stops on this trip's itinerary: 20 locations at which the future is being conceived and designed, decided and implemented as well as thwarted and destroyed. A particular theme is being assigned to each location: climate change, terror, migration, genetic engineering, etc.... Journalistic, artistic and scientific means will be utilized to elaborate on the key problems of our shared future and to get an accurate picture of our globalized, networked world. On the 81st day, the results of this research will be summarized at a global conference that will be one of the highlights of the 2009 Ars Electronica Festival (September 3-8).

Linz's Main Square will be the hub of this project. Here, a signal tower will make the incoming and outgoing data and communication flows visible; a large-format video screen will serve as a "media window" that enables people on site

to establish contact with human beings at the other locations and engage in a dialog with them. At certain times, interpreters will be on hand to aid the communications process. At regular intervals, the Main Square will also serve as a setting for discussions, artistic projects, messages, and even banquets.

The point of departure as well as the final destination of this journey of discovery will be the new Ars Electronica Center, the site of the map & data room where all information and communiqués converge and are visualized. Visitors to this space will enjoy an unforgettable experience of the profound network linkages that totally pervade our modern world.

Solidly established regionally and integrated in international networks— voestalpine is both an ideal traveling companion on this trip and a symbol of the idea behind "80+1." As the most important single factor in the regional economy, voestalpine endows Linz with its specific local identity and is, at the same time, a classic example of a successful global player. Thus, when Ars Electronica and voestalpine depart on this shared journey of discovery in 2009, it is by no means least of all a piece of Linz reality that is the theme of this undertaking.