

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

# Ars Electronica: Recap of an Outstanding Year

2006 was notable for a whole series of successful events and projects staged in Linz and at important venues worldwide. The Ars Electronica Center attracted 74,199 visitors on its way to setting a new attendance record. And submissions to the Prix Ars Electronica hit a new high as well: 3,177 entries from 71 countries. About 35,000 visitors, 535 artists and 504 journalists from around the world came to the Ars Electronica Festival, and last year's one-day outing to St. Florian garnered rave reviews from festivalgoers. Last but not least, the Ars Electronica Futurelab produced a series of fascinating events and brought some prestigious joint ventures to fruition. Plus, 2006's many successes had a major impact on the bottom line: operating revenues were the source of about half of Ars Electronica's total budget.

Simplicity – the art of complexity

### **Ars Electronica Festival 2006**

An absolutely unprecedented level of enthusiasm was already evident at the outset of the 2006 Ars Electronica Festival: 1,703 visitors stormed the Open House on Hauptstraße for the premiere of the new exhibits. The upbeat mood was still going strong at "Harbor Resonance," the kickoff extravaganza at the Port of Linz.

An exciting first in the festival's history was the one-day outing to a new venue. Entitled "Going to the Country – A Day-trip to the Hinterland in Search of Simplicity," Ars Electronica picked up and moved the entire festival to the St. Florian Monastery of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. Public interest was overwhelming, as more than 2,000 guests attended an extensive lineup of lectures, concerts and sound installations staged in this magnificent baroque monastery.

"We're very pleased that the interest in our content and events has been continually increasing for quite a long time now, but the reception accorded in 2006 far surpassed anything we've experienced," said Ars Electronica Artistic Director Gerfried Stocker. "This is strong confirmation of the course we're pursuing: diversified settings including classical cultural venues like concert halls and museums, Linz's Main Square, as well as completely novel locations like the St. Florian Monastery."

### **Prix Ars Electronica 2006**

With 3,177 entries from 71 countries, the Prix Ars Electronica attracted the most submissions ever. This underscores the Prix's position as the world's foremost competition and barometer of developments in the field of digital media art. The trend in 2006 was in the direction of intensified emphasis on social and political involvement, which Gerfried Stocker explained in the following terms: "The dream of harnessing digital technologies to make our societies more democratic and more just has, in reality, given way to ever more pervasive commercialization. Media artists are striving to counteract this, questioning conventional ways of doing things and developing ideas to empower the individual."

### **Ars Electronica Center**

Having hosted 74,199 visitors in 2006, the Museum of the Future's staff can look back on a very successful year. Excellent attendance bears out the

sociopolitical relevance of new technologies and also substantiates the exhibits' orientation—the content itself and how it's gotten across. All installations invite users to take a playful, active, hand-on approach to knowledge acquisition. This entertaining as well as informative mode of human-computer interaction is the secret to the Ars Electronica Center's success. An essential role is also played by a year-round program of workshops and events:

### **First Lego League**

"nano-quest" was the motto of the FIRST LEGO LEAGUE robot competition held in '06. Eligible participants were kids age 10-16, who used LEGO pieces, motors, sensors and user-friendly software to construct robots that had some pretty tricky tasks to master. Afterwards, the young engineers got a brief introduction to the new field of nanotechnology. The aim of the FIRST LEGO LEAGUE is to foster enthusiasm for science and high-tech among members of tomorrow's generation by providing an upbeat pleasant setting for research, planning, programming, testing and gameplaying.

### **The Age of Simulation**

The Ars Electronica Center teamed up with FAS.research to stage "The Age of Simulation – Learning and Research in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." This conference was attended by experts in science, research and education from around the world. They were joined by network specialists, game developers and artists who discussed forms of network analysis that hold great promise for the future and simulation in various social spheres. "The Age of Simulation" also utilized interactive installations and project presentations to provide fascinating insights into the world of simulation.

### **City Puzzle**

The "City Puzzle" simulation game was set up to enhance one of the Museum of the Future's most popular installations. Users can select one of several different worlds and customize it with urban architectural elements. The built-up cells

react to each other, thus revealing sub-optimal ensembles and excessively dense development. Among the architectural elements, there emerges a network of streets on which the flow of vehicles reacts to the configuration of the buildings and simulates the way modern real-time traffic management systems function.

### **Transfer**

In this EU regional project, Ars Electronica supports the technological R&D activities of small and medium-sized companies. "Transfer" is an exemplary effort to get research labs more involved in addressing private sector issues and needs. The initial phase was designed to identify and evaluate possibilities of fostering professionalization and innovation by implementing the latest media technology. This was followed up by the development of concepts, methods, tools and training programs & materials custom-tailored to the needs of individual firms. This initiative is designed to benefit not only the particular companies involved but also the regional economy as a whole.

### **Wednesday Visions**

"Wednesday Visions" was a series of 12 events that focused on a broad spectrum of themes—for example, "Cooperation as a Factor in Success"; "New Technologies: Chance for Rural Development — Communities and Regions in Upper Austria as Digital Communities"; and "Can Innovation be Planned?"

### **Ars Electronica Futurelab**

The Ars Electronica Futurelab carried out a whole series of cooperative projects in 2006. The interdisciplinary media art lab generated gross revenue of approximately two million euros and thus made a substantial contribution to financing Ars Electronica.

### **Mahler Visionized**

To mark the Western German Broadcasting Company's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Ars Electronica collaborated with artist Johannes Deutsch to produce Gustav Mahler's Symphony Nr. 2 in C minor as an interactive visualization in three-dimensional space. The work was performed on January 1, 2006 by the Cologne Philharmonic and televised live.

### **Sound of Europe**

With its work on "Sound of Europe," the Futurelab blazed new trails in the multimedial staging of conferences and seminars. AEC staffers used state-of-the-art communications and presentation technology to prepare content for the major event kicking off Austria's presidency of the EU Council. The aim was to completely avoid interpretive intervention, and instead to support the proceedings with summaries and analytic visualizations, to document the full diversity of the participants' positions, points and views, and to come up with a lively new approach to presenting addresses delivered before a large audience.

### ***Le Sacre du Printemps***

In its adaptation of Igor Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring," Ars Electronica Futurelab engineers took up the idea of re-visualizing a piece of music originally composed for the stage. A three-dimensional space set up to react to musical impulses created the setting for a narrative structure, in this case in combination with the expressive medium of dance. The extraordinary element is this staging was the interactive linkage of orchestral music and computer visualizations.

### **Content Conference**

The Ars Electronica Futurelab was responsible for the media design of the European Creative Industry Conference held in 2006 by the Austrian Federal Chancellery and the European Commission. In addition to staging the presentations at the seminars held in Vienna's Hofburg Palace, the Futurelab also designed an extensive dinner and evening program in the

Museumsquartier. Twelve large-format screens with a total projection surface of 800 m<sup>2</sup> transported the invited guests into an artificial digital world. The featured works of outstanding media art included the visualization of Mahler's 2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony and the real-time visualization of selected rooms in Vienna's Schönbrunn Palace.

### **Journey to the Center of the Earth**

For the Haag Summer Theater '06 production of Jules Verne's "Journey to the Center of the Earth," the Futurelab provided a computer-generated stage set. The cast navigated through fantastic worlds that took shape around them as real-time graphics. Moreover, the actors could react to the audience and all could embark jointly on a virtual journey.

### **Swarovski Product Visualization**

The Ars Electronica Futurelab developed a special process to visualize the cut crystal objects created by the Swarovski Company and to do it in a way that does justice to the dazzling light refractions and shimmering colors produced by the different crystal forms.

### **Art in Hotel Spitz**

The designers who planned the recent renovation of Linz's Hotel Spitz wanted to accentuate artistic creativity. Ars Electronica's contribution was fourfold: an installation conceived as a bookshelf that provides a glimpse of cultural life in Linz; a reactive wall that registers the motion of hotel guests passing by and transforms it into a computer visualization; a video channel providing entrée into the world of the Ars Electronica Festival; and a selection of prints depicting Ars Electronica projects.

### **working\_world.net**

As a partner institution of the World of Work Museum in Steyr, Austria, the Ars Electronica Futurelab has developed numerous interactive installations for their

“working\_world.net” exhibition. An interactive visitors’ concept was implemented throughout the facility’s two levels. The thematic focus is on the interrelationships among work, technology and everyday life in the future.

### **Bavaria Bohemia Center**

The mission of the Bavaria Bohemia Center that opened last March is to foster the rapprochement of two cultural regions that used to be separated by the Iron Curtain. They found an ideal partner for this undertaking at Linz’s Ars Electronica Futurelab. The result of this collaboration is a 3D stereo video on neighborly relations between Germans and Czechs as well as a professional setting in the cultural center.

### **Ars Electronica Goes Global**

Ars Electronica has also been cutting a fine figure on the international stage. Important guest appearances last year took Ars to the Bank Festival of Art in Adelaide, Australia, the ARCO in Madrid and the donumenta in Regensburg, Germany. Ars Electronica also took part in the International New Media Arts Exhibition and Symposium in Peking. Prix Ars Electronica Director Iris Mayr curated (jointly with Lev Manovich, Yuko Hasegawa and others) the “Dual Realities” exhibition at the International Media Art Biennale in Seoul.

### **International New Media Arts Exhibition and Symposium, Peking**

Ars Electronica has already been working together with the International New Media Arts Exhibition and Symposium in Peking for several years now. In 2006, three Ars projects were presented at the renowned Tsinghua University: the Ars Electronica Futurelab’s ARSBOX, “Watchful Portrait” by John Gerrard and “Life Spacies II” by Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau.

### **International Media Art Biennale, Seoul**

“Dual Realities” was the 2006 theme. Iris Mayr, director of the Prix Ars Electronica, co-curated this exhibition.

### **Bank Festival of Art, Adelaide**

For the opening of the Bank Festival of Art, "Peoples' Portrait" used state-of-the-art telecommunications technology to link up the cities Adelaide, Seoul, Beijing, New York and Linz. Visitors' portraits taken in special on-site photo stations were sent to a central server and displayed on video walls in all five cities.

### **ARCO, Madrid**

Madrid's ARCO celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006. The Ars Electronica Center was involved in the "Directions of Digital Art – Quo vadis Media Art" symposium. Participants from around the world provided an international overview of the artistic encounter with digital media.

### **donumenta, Regensburg**

Ars Electronica also did a guest shot at the donumenta in Regensburg. "Bytes & Bodies – Of Real Bodies in Digital Spaces" showcased works by media artists from Austria and other countries. The projects—several of which were produced at the Ars Electronica Futurelab—ran the gamut from interactive installations to code art and network art all the way to genetically modified bacteria. The exhibition was accompanied by a one-day symposium staged by Ars Electronica.

### **Apparition II, Hong Kong**

The world premiere of Apparition II, a dance and media performance by Klaus Obermaier and the Ars Electronica Futurelab, took place in Hong Kong on September 16. Through the use of interactive sensor and tracking technology, the dancers' movements influence the stage set.

### **Joint Venture with Kansai TV, Japan**

A cooperative agreement with the Japanese media group Kansai TV was also consummated in 2006. The aim is to increase Japanese audiences' exposure to



media art and to upgrade the infrastructure necessary for an artistic encounter with digital media technology. Ars Electronica brings its artistic know-how and global media art network to the table; Kansai TV, for its part, contributes high-level competence in the media field.

## **Outlook for 2007**

### **The New Ars Electronica Center**

Linz has been named European Capital of Culture 2009, and Ars Electronica, in light of its international reputation, is a key player. The architectural setting for this starring role will be a new, expanded Ars Electronica Center. The official kickoff of the "Building Site of the Future" is the groundbreaking ceremony set for March 1.

A new, multilevel wing is being constructed immediately adjacent to the existing structure. Both buildings will be wrapped in a backlit glass shell resulting in a homogenous, unitary whole. This cityscape highlight will function as a transparent light sculpture in its own right and the architectural counterpart of the Lentos across the Danube.

In the direction of the Parish Church, parallel to Kirchengasse, the AEC complex will be enhanced with an attractive plaza for public events. The eastern end will curve upwards and feature steps/tiered seating; the space directly below this will house the Ars Electronica Futurelab. Generously dimensioned exhibition spaces will be located beneath the plaza. The new Ars Electronica Center will feature more than 6,500 m<sup>2</sup> of space. Completion is set for the end of 2008—just in time for the kickoff of the Capital of Culture year.

### **The Museum of the Future Moves to Linzer City**

While this new artistic space is taking shape on the north bank of the Danube, the Museum of the Future will continue to operate as usual at temporary quarters downtown in Linzer City. The new address until the end of 2008 is

Graben 15 (on the corner of Dametzstraße). Here, three floors make available 1,500 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibit space (and even more when all the possibilities afforded by the stairwells and exterior façade are exploited). And if that's not news enough: the Museum of the Future will also be introducing two new focal-point themes: "Everything in Motion" and "Adapted from Nature." We cordially invite you to get a free-of-charge preview at our Open House on Tuesday, May 1, 2007. The official opening will be on Thursday, May 3, 2007, and we'll be hosting a full schedule of events through Sunday, May 6, 2007. Incidentally: all expenses attributable to the move to Linzer City are being borne by Ars Electronica with funds generated by its own operations.

### **Prix Ars Electronica 2007**

Creatives worldwide have until March 1 to submit their projects for 2007 Prix Ars Electronica prize consideration. Awaiting the winners are six Golden Nica statuettes and a total of 122,500 euros in prize money. The jurors will convene April 19-22.

The Ars Electronica Center and the ORF – Austrian Broadcasting Company's Upper Austria Regional Studio have made some changes in this 21<sup>st</sup> edition of the competition. The content spectrum has been expanded through the addition of the Hybrid Art and Media.Art.Research categories, and Net Vision has been merged into Digital Communities.

**Hybrid Art** will honor outstanding hybrid and transdisciplinary projects. The essential element is the blending and interweaving of different media and genres into new forms of artistic expression. For many artists, it's become a matter of course to transgress boundaries: they conduct research, pursue an active commitment to social and political causes, or engage with pop culture, and this category acknowledges this development.

**Media.Art.Research**, in turn, focuses on scholarly work in art history and media studies. This year's theme is net-based artforms. The prizewinning work will be honored with an award from the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute founded in Linz in 2005.

### **Ars Electronica Festival**

This year's Ars Electronica Festival is set for September 6-11. Preparations are already running in high gear.

### **Linz 09**

#### **Website 09 / Zone 06, 07, 08**

The Ars Electronica Futurelab is responsible for the design of the Linz 09 website as well as for the editorial work on the individual year domains, Zone 06, 07 and 08, that are meant to serve as platforms for current art and community projects. They are online reflections of cultural life in Linz on its way to the Capital of Culture year.

### **Our World in 80 Days**

In another project launched in conjunction with the Capital of Culture, Ars Electronica invites you to travel through space and time. The point of departure is Linz's Main Square; the itinerary includes 80 places all over the world at which the future is taking shape in thought and deed, or perhaps where it's being thwarted or destroyed. These 80 locations can be viewed as proxies for the key themes of the future, which is why this journey will also be a confrontation with our future and the future of Europe.

### **In the Echo of Time**

History doesn't emerge and take shape as it's happening. It's always written after the fact, in retrospect. Historiography is a process that's connected with the state of the source material and the current *Zeitgeist*, a process that's subject to continual change. In 2009, Ars Electronica will stage a multimedial

visualization of material from the archives of the City of Linz and the Province of Upper Austria. This form of digitization not only serves the purpose of enhanced presentation; it also makes new approaches and insights possible—in the echo of time.

### **Interactive Guidance System for SAP Germany in Walldorf**

One of the largest and most extensive projects the Ars Electronica Futurelab has ever undertaken will be installed and activated at the end of March 2007. That's when an interactive guidance system at the headquarters of SAP Germany in Walldorf will begin helping guests find their way to the company's new visitors center.

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