

Prix Ars Electronica 2004 launches its new "Digital Communities" category

The world's premiere competition for computer art is being held for the 18th time this year. And to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Ars Electronica, a new category has been added. "Digital Communities" will award two Golden Nicas and prize money totaling 40,000 euros to exemplary projects that are furthering the development of an open Information Society.

What's so special about "Digital Communities"?

"The projects in this new category are utilizing modern technologies to implement a vision of new, open and democratic structures. They are bringing people closer to one another, creating means of access to information, and making a tangible contribution to improving the quality of life and promoting social coexistence." (Gerfried Stocker, Ars Electronica Artistic Director) To mark Ars Electronica's 25th anniversary, this new forum is focusing attention on phenomena of great current relevance to Information Society.

"We hope that the new category "Digital Communities" of the Prix Ars Electronica will influence, inspire and help drive development of ever-more useful and humane uses of digital community software and practice." (Howard Rheingold, Author of "The Virtual Community" (1993) and "Smart Mobs-The Next Social Revolution" (2003))

Digital Communities ... what exactly are they?

The Digital Communities category will spotlight bold and inspired innovations impacting human coexistence, efforts to bridge the "Digital Divide" that is the upshot of geographic as well as gender-based inequalities, outstanding social software, and initiatives that enhance the accessibility of technological-social infrastructure or even develop and install it in the first place.

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The defining characteristic of such Digital Communities is their utilization of digital and network-linked technologies to contribute to improving the lives of people all over the world. In this spirit, the aim of the new category is to single out for recognition exemplary projects from around the world that display sociopolitical relevance and excellence in promoting social innovation. Thus, Digital Communities addresses a broad spectrum of projects, programs, initiatives and phenomena in which social innovation is taking place, as it were, in real time.

Outstanding examples are collective "blogging" in the Internet, social software, learning, gaming and fan communities, eDemocracy initiatives as well as innovative development projects.

How will the projects be evaluated?

All projects entered by the submission deadline of March 12, 2004 will be assessed by a committee of experts from around the world. The selection of the winners will be done by a jury made up of leading international authorities: Howard Rheingold, Oliviero Toscani, Shanthi Kalathil, Joichi Ito, Jane Metcalfe and Dorothy Okello.

The awards ceremony will be held in June 2004 in conjunction with the UN Global Compact Summit at UN Headquarters in New York.

Partners of Digital Communities

The new category was established in partnership with SAP, the world's leading provider of business software solutions. Since 2002, Ars Electronica and SAP have completed several projects that promote the interaction of media art and business.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) is proud to support "Digital Communities": *"Hopefully this prize will encourage others to think beyond the traditional ways of utilizing technologies and explore the immense potential these technologies have to improve the human condition."* (**Shari Steele**, Executive Director, Electronic Frontier Foundation)

Committed Partners in the Private Sector

This category is made possible through cooperation with SAP, the world's leading supplier of business software.

The 2004 Prix Ars Electronica is sponsored by SAP, Telekom Austria and voestalpine. Substantial support is being provided by the City of Linz, the Province of Upper Austria, and ÖKS Österreichischer Kultur-Service.

Prix Ars Electronica – International Competition for Cyberarts

The Prix Ars Electronica is being held for the 18th time in 2004. This cyberarts competition is conceived as an open platform for a wide variety of disciplines in the field of digital media at the interface of art, technology and society. With more than 21,000 works submitted for prize consideration by 17,000 participants from 87 countries since its inception in 1987, and prize money totaling 130,000 euros this year, the Prix Ars Electronica is the most important, highest endowed and most successful international showcase of excellence in digital media art.

Prix Ars Electronica 2004: Important Dates

Submission Deadline:	March 12, 2004
Jury Deliberations:	April 23-25, 2004
Digital Communities Awards Ceremony:	June 23, 2004, New York
Prix Ars Electronica Gala:	September 3, 2004, Linz

For detailed information, visit us online at:

<http://www.aec.at/en/prix/communities/communities.asp>

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