

## **Ars Electronica**

### **15 Years of the Festival of Art, Technology and Society**

EXHIBITION IN THE UPPER AUSTRIAN LANDESGALERIE, MUSEUM FRANCISCO CAROLINUM

"However, what I could gather from publications about previous meetings, together with what I was able to experience for myself at Ars Electronica, has strengthened my conviction that what we are confronted with here is a central issue of the present time."

Vilém Flusser.

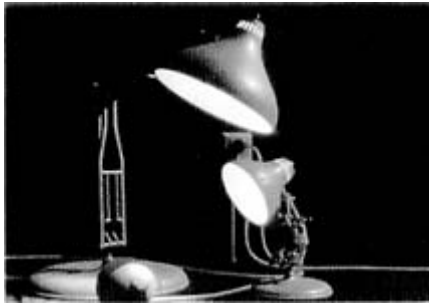


Ars '82: Charlotte Moorman und Otto Piene: "Sky Kiss"

Ars Electronica is a festival for art, technology and society. For fifteen years now it has maintained a consistently forward-looking approach and dedicated itself to the creative use of the new electronic media. In accordance with this selfdefinition, so to speak, the history of the festival is one of continual change from the foundations up. Ars Electronica does not burden itself with any limitations regarding target audience or technical distinctions; the creative element, dedicated to further development in the future, has always remained the primary concern, so on the one hand Ars Electronica hosts a high-powered, specialist symposium with international experts; on the other, it attracts up to 150.000 visitors to the Danube Park in Linz for the Klangwolke (Sound Cloud). Ars Electronica has presented computer art in the form of picture exhibitions, soundspaces, complex space installations, and even as artistic interventions in public spaces. Time and again the festival has presented new ways of arranging colours, shapes and sounds, allowing festival events to consistently transcend the limits of categorisation, as well as the limits of expectation: Art has penetrated ever further, ever more appropriately, into new social contexts, as a force with which to be reckoned.

The exhibition at the Upper Austrian Landesgalerie is not therefore intended to perform the (impossible) task of putting together a kind of "hit list" of the most interesting, most influential, most exciting, most discussed, most comprehensive, most complex, most noticeable (and so forth) events from the history of the multi-faceted festival, but to use concentrated emphasis to underline those areas in which Ars Electronica has come to exert a formative influence. Naturally the selection gives the impression of a quotation, and above all, makes reference to the power of the experience in question. All Ars Electronica productions have, after all, been tailored to the uniqueness of an experience specific to one particular place

and time, and were, moreover, documented in great detail in the comprehensive catalogue books. In this sense and with the help of electronic media, the exhibition strives to convey the fifteen-year history of Ars Electronica not as the recreation of an historical event from the distant past, but as an intellectual and sensory experience.



Goldene Nica Prix Ars Electronica '87: "Luxo jr." von John Lasseter

This exhibition is divided into the following areas:

### **1. Information:**

— Basic information about previous Ars Electronica festivals, their overall themes, the people responsible for the programme of events, the projects that were presented, the symposia, concerts and performances, are all featured in a moving body of text with individual photographs.

— A specially designed overview of the information is also available on a CD-ROM, "15 Years of Ars Electronica", put together by Station Rose, giving the visitor interactive access to make his or her own way through information stored in the form of text, still pictures and video (see Vol. 1, p. 201).

— Every year, the highlights of the Ars Electronica festival are summarised in a TV documentary. This material, which can already be deemed historic, gives a very direct and vivid insight, not only into the programme of events itself, but also into the atmosphere of the festival. These documentaries will be shown in continuous rotation as part of the exhibition; however it will also be possible to view them individually on request.

— A cinema setting will be installed in the ballroom of the Upper Austrian Landesmuseum using video projection facilities. All the prize-winning computer animations from the eight-year history of the Prix Ars Electronica will be featured, along with their creators, as will videotapes created especially for Ars Electronica.

### **2. Relics**

A few of the great many artistic projects realised at Ars Electronica have been selected for the exhibition: they testify to the considerable diversity and the breaking of boundaries the festival entails. The exhibition will pay tribute to these projects in the form of relics -material remains — combined with short video sequences and photographs.



Ars '87: SPA 12, einer der ersten elektronischen Roboter kam aus den USA nach Linz

### **3. Tunnel of observations and visions**

In the course of the many Ars Electronica festivals, particularly at the scientific symposia, some very perceptive things have been said about social, technological and artistic issues relating to the electronic media. Besides topical remarks about the contemporary state of affairs, these observations often relate to visions, or expectations, of the future.

Memorable statements of this kind, excerpted from the whole 15-year history of Ars Electronica, have been arranged thematically for this exhibition and thereby given new historical contexts and associations. This can be used to test earlier predictions for the future, which in some cases have proved surprisingly accurate, and furthermore, much is revealed about the intellectual use of the computer over the past 15 years.

### **4. Klangwolke (Sound Cloud)**

Even though the Linz Klangwolke is no longer a part of Ars Electronica, but the opening event of the annual Brucknerfest, it is still closely associated with the history of Ars Electronica. From the very first Ars Electronica in 1979, the festival's social highlight was the "Sound Cloud experience", consisting of a large-scale concert with the appropriate optical interpretation, in the open air. The exhibition will recreate this special "Klangwolke" experience by means of an interactive sound installation. .

### **5. Interactive television**

One of the particularly important Ars Electronica innovations is its involvement with interactive television, an experiment that started in the early days of the festival and has continued ever since. In addition to the current development of such a television project in the Linz Brucknerhaus concert hall (see p. 12), the exhibition in the Upper Austrian Landesgalerie is presenting a room installation by the Linz Stadtwerkstatt ("City Workshop"; cultural centre) featuring projects which have been carried out in the past by the Stadtwerkstatt or by Van Gogh TV.

### **6. The Prix Ars Electronica 1994**

The exhibition of 15 years of Ars Electronica is not limiting itself to displaying history. As a reference to the latest artistic forms of electronic media involvement (complementing the other sites of the Ars Electronica exhibition), it will present a selection of works that have

been awarded prizes in the Computer Graphics and Interactive Art categories of this year's Prix Ars Electronica.

PETER ASSMANN

Responsible for concept and coordination:  
PETER ASSMANN

Exhibition organisation: Upper Austrian Landesgalerie, ORF Upper Austrian Branch and the Brucknerhaus Linz.  
Exhibition design: Sepp Auer and Robin Hood Inc.

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Ars '88: Philosophische Tafelrunde (v. l. n. r.): Peter Gente, Hannes Böhring, Vilém Flusser, Peter Weibel, Jean Baudrillard, Friedrich Kittler, Heinz von Foerster