

FleshFactor — Preface

Gerfried Stocker/ Christine Schöpf

Almost two decades of the digital revolution have been highlighted, analysed and critically assessed by Ars Electronica in the context of a "Festival of Art, Technology and Society". This has been the period of our century in which the transition from the industrialised to the information-based society has assumed its hitherto most salient characteristics. Frequently, groundbreaking concepts and whole new branches of knowledge have been the subject of examination. Enormous strides have been made in order to encompass new topics and establish new modes of perception. And there appears to be no limitations on technological developments to come. Yet the concomitant social changes have already assumed such dimensions that we are now fascinated, no longer by the possibilities of future utopias, but rather by that which has already come to pass. The future seems to have reversed directions and is collapsing upon us.

FleshFactor — Informationsmaschine Mensch, the title of Ars Electronica 97, makes it clear that this year's theme is the Mensch, the human being. In light of the latest findings, developments and achievements in the fields of genetic engineering, neuro-science and networked intelligence, the conceptual complex now under investigation will include the status of the individual in networked artificial systems, the human body as the ultimate original, and the strategies for orientation and interrelation of the diametric opposites, man and machine, in the reciprocal, necessary processes of adaptation and assimilation.