

2015 Ars Electronica Festival

Spectacular Location and a New Feature: A Line-up of Preliminary Events

(Linz, May 13, 2015) POST CITY – Habitats for the 21st Century is the theme of Ars Electronica 2015. This artistic-scientific encounter with the future of our cities will take place at a downtown location that's as spectacular as it is unique: a decommissioned postal service logistics center on the grounds of Linz's main train station.

A Former Austrian Postal Service Logistics Center Is Being Converted into an 80,000-m² Urban Laboratory

Following 12 construction phases over six years, the postal service logistics center at Linz's main train station officially opened on July 7, 1994. Putting up this structure providing over 80,000 m² of usable space cost 1.6 billion Austrian schillings [over €100 million]. The infrastructure included an approximately 4,000-meter-long package sorting unit, a storage facility for 10,000 parcels, an entire battery of 12-meter-tall spiral chutes and, by no means least of all, the 240-meter-long indoor freight car loading dock. About 1,000 people worked here processing 100,000 packets and 15,000 bundles of letters daily—thus, an average of 5,000 packets/hour were distributed to 113 locations. In August 2014, the whole operation was transferred to Allhaming. Once the premises were vacated, the postal service logistics center at Linz's main train station was mothballed in October/November 2014. In conjunction with Ars Electronica 2015, the facility will temporarily morph into PostCity, an open urban lab for the people of Linz and festivalgoers from around the world.

A Premiere: Preliminary Events Leading up to the Festival

The 2015 Ars Electronica Festival will take place, as always, in the first week in September. But this year, for the first time, a line-up of preliminary events will kick off in late May and make the prime venue, the former postal service logistics center, accessible to the public. The offerings will include guided tours, exhibitions and two projects designed for participation by locals. Parallel to this, the festival producers are issuing an open call for project ideas dealing with the festival theme. €50,000 have been set aside to fund these projects that, as a lead-in to the festival, are to be set up in PostCity beginning in late May and, of course, remain on display there throughout the festival. Especially welcome—though by no means mandatory—are projects and visions having to do with Linz.

An Experience: A Guided Tour through PostCity

Beginning May 20, guided tours through PostCity will be offered on a regular basis. The approximately 1½-hour tour will cover the entirety of the postal service logistics center with its spectacular architecture. Tour participants are in for some fascinating insights about this huge structure as well as various aspects of modern urban development and scenarios for the

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city of the future. The itinerary will also include selected exhibitions and exhibits that will now be going on display in conjunction with the festival's line-up of preliminary events.

Dates/Times: May 20 (6 PM), June 6 (3 PM), June 17 (6 PM), July 4 (3 PM) and every two weeks thereafter.

Start/Finish: Entrance to the Post Office at Bahnhofplatz 11, 4020 Linz

Duration: Approximately 1½ hours

Reservations: tickets@aec.at

Info: www.aec.at/postcity

All guided tours through POST CITY are free of charge!

Austria's "Largest" Architectural Exhibition: 1,001 Models

The cities of the future will look the way architects and urban planners are designing them today. After all, whatever is built now will shape the cityscape for decades to come and decisively impact the quality of life of the next generation(s). Conversely, the infrastructure that we don't implement now will be sorely missed tomorrow. Thus, since time immemorial, the city has been a long-term project because the "gravity of buildings" sets totally different lifecycles in motion than the disposable electronics of our smartphones. But how can we connect these two developments? How can we create smart cities that, instead of being a cause of anxiety, can actually enhance our lives? What should urban habitats for smart citizens be like?

All over the world, architects and urban planners are grappling with these issues. This year's Ars Electronica Festival will showcase visible manifestations of their inventiveness, visionary power and planning competence in the form of an amazingly diverse array of architectural models. Together, amidst the vast halls of a mothballed postal service logistics facility, they'll make up an extraordinary model city ranging across the architectural spectrum—from a DIY prefab house to a futuristic high-rise, from houseboats to row houses, from a kindergarten to a factory. "1,001 Models of Habitats for the 21st Century" is the title of this production that, besides furnishing an inspiring ambience for the festival, will also constitute this country's "largest" architectural exhibition.

Rethinking Linz, Reconfiguring Linz

In conjunction with this year's festival program, Ars Electronica is also staging two participatory projects:

Starting in August, Marcus Neustetter's Trinity Session asks pointed questions. To whom does the public sphere of a city actually belong? Whose names are given to its streets and squares, and which social and cultural values are manifested thereby? Marcus Neustetter will be conducting workshops in which local communities can give the streets and squares of their city new names, dedicate individual thoroughfares or even whole neighborhoods to new purposes, and completely reconceptualize them in the process. All of these ideas—in the form of drawings, photos or three-dimensional objects—will then be positioned on a map of the respective city in as large a format as possible. What will gradually emerge in this way is a sculptural collection of the perspectives and visions of individual city dwellers.

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Starting today, Ars Electronica invites all Linzers to contribute their concepts, visions and ideas for the Linz of tomorrow. The assignment: on a gigantic map of Linz, (re)design the white spots, each of which represents an inner-city site that, due to its geographic location or current utilization, can be regarded as a zone to which one of this year's four thematic clusters is applicable. Thus, the neighborhood around the train station represents Future Mobility, the plant grounds of Chemie and voestalpine stand for Future Work, and the Danube and its banks correspond to Future Resilience. Plus, there'll be a white spot set aside as a preserve of the imagination and a setting for Linz utopias. Each of these blank precincts will get a make-over—in the form of DIY houses, skyscrapers, bridges or streets, by means of paper cubes with pictures pasted on the outside, or a Shadowgram accompanied by a brief statement.

Open Call: How will we humans live in the cities of the future?

Artists, scientists, scholars, contrarians & lateral thinkers, social entrepreneurs—in short, creative conceptioneers and innovative spirits are now cordially invited to submit their own specific, concrete project ideas having to do with social coexistence in future cities. In return, the entrants whose submissions in response to this open call are selected to be produced will be granted access to a spacious venue in PostCity and a portion of the project budget that totals €50,000. Online submissions to www.aec.at/postcity can begin immediately; the deadline is June 11, 2015. Each submission must include a concise description of the theme-related project/concept (feel free to submit a video), precise technical specifications and anticipated space requirements, a corresponding cost estimate, a brief biography of the person making the submission, and his/her contact information.

Submission Deadline: June 11, 2015

Online Submission (and for additional info): www.aec.at/postcity

The 2015 Festival Theme: POST CITY – Habitats for the 21st Century

“POST CITY – Habitats for the 21st Century” is the theme of Ars Electronica 2015. The festival is an inquiry into how cities of the future will have to be configured when there are more robots than people working in factories, everything is intelligently interlinked, autos drive autonomously and drones deliver the mail. And what does this mean for future megacities—above all, those on seaboards—when climate change really does shift into high gear? The rethinking of urban living spaces has already begun—all over the world, people are coming up with exciting ideas for new architectures and forms of social organization that are able to keep up with the changes the next few decades will bring.

Dovetailing art, technology and society in the inimitable way Ars Electronica has done ever since 1979, experts from all over the world will be convening at an extraordinary think tank in Linz September 3-7, 2015. In going about this, the Festival is focusing on four thematic clusters in order to consider, from both local and global perspectives, how developments—those already in progress and prognosticated shifts—will be changing how our cities look and function: Future Mobility – The city as transportation hub; Future Work – The city as workplace and marketplace; Future Citizens – The city as community; and Future Resilience – The city as stronghold.

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