

Ars Electronica's Year in Review:

From SoundCloud to TimeSpace – 2012 Was the Year of Megaprojects and Record Revenue

(Linz, December 27, 2012) Ars Electronica Linz GmbH produced more projects—and more large-scale productions—in 2012 than ever before in its history. So it's no surprise that this was a record-breaking year—in terms of public response, media impact and revenue as well.

A jam-packed line-up ...

In March, Vienna International Airport unveiled its new state-of-the-art terminal, and with it the largest art-in-architecture installation ever created by the Ars Electronica Futurelab. In late April, about 40 Prix jurors convened in Linz to select the cream of the crop from among thousands of entries. Ars Electronica EXPORT collaborated with Volkswagen AG to stage "Impetus and Movement," a major exhibition in Berlin last May. Ars Electronica invited the world to Linz for what's become a September tradition, this year producing not only the Festival but the voestalpine Klangwolke too. Later that month, Ars Electronica EXPORT did guest shots at Beijing Design Week and the donumenta in Regensburg, Germany. Then in October, it was on the University of Sao Paulo and, in mid-month, the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts Taichung. Wrapping up a big year was the December opening of the "Time is Hero" exhibition at the Ars Electronica Center Linz.

.. and the highest revenues in Ars Electronica's history

Based on preliminary projections, total revenues of Ars Electronica Linz GmbH came in at €13.7 million as compared to €12.5 million in the prior year—a €1.2 million (9.6%) increase. The driving force behind this robust growth is the Futurelab, which accounted for €4.5 million in revenues. The newest division, AE Solutions, got off to a fast start, contributing €500,000 to the total.

The higher output was reflected by an approximately 5% increase in workforce size versus 2011. The mean number of employees working at Ars Electronica Linz GmbH in 2012 was approximately 197.

Prix jury reviewed 3,674 works from all over the world; Bill Fontana won the Collide@CERN Award

3,674 projects from 72 countries were submitted for prize consideration to the Prix Ars Electronica in 2011-12. The jury of international experts took three days to assess entries in seven categories and select the winners. The Golden Nica grand prizes went to artists from Luxemburg, Estonia, Great Britain, USA, Syria, Switzerland and Austria. This year's Collide@CERN Residency Award presented jointly by Europe's CERN research facility and Ars Electronica went to Bill Fontana (USA), whose innovative work in the sound art genre has been seen/heard at such world-renowned institutions as Tate Modern and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Bill Fontana will exhibit the initial artistic results of his residency divided between CERN and the Ars Electronica Futurelab at the next Ars Electronica Festival in September 2013 in Linz.

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90,000 people attended the voestalpine Klangwolke and witnessed a world premiere

This year's SoundCloud attracted an audience of 90,000 to Linz's riverside Donaupark on the evening of September 1, 2012. The absolute highlights of "The Cloud in the Web" co-produced by the Brucknerhaus and Ars Electronica were the thousands of radiant, radio-synchronized letters crafted by audience members especially for this spectacle, and the world's first outdoor, computer-controlled swarm of 49 quadcopters. The world premiere of this so-called spaxel (short for space pixel) caused a sensation—not only among viewers on site but also on the internet, where the video of the extravaganza on YouTube has garnered 700,000 views so far.

Ars Electronica made guest appearances in Berlin, Beijing, Regensburg, Sao Paulo and Taiwan

The third exhibition Ars Electronica Linz has presented jointly with Volkswagen AG is entitled "Impetus and Movement," creative treatments of the dynamics of thrust and reaction done by European, American and Japanese artists whose works ultimately scrutinize the tense interplay between self-determination and external coercion. The spectrum of artistic approaches includes subversive strategies of appropriating public spaces, extraordinary methods of seeing the world with other people's eyes, and nonsensical machines designed to perform simple tasks in ways that are as complicated as possible.

At the Beijing Design Week from late September to mid-October, Ars Electronica presented a version of GeoCity that the Futurelab configured especially for the Chinese capital. "GeoCity Beijing" links the municipality's geographical information system (GIS) with maps and/or high-definition aerial photographs and a variety of other content such as statistical data.

Julian Palacz's "algorithmic search for love," "The Tenth Sentiment" by Ryota Kuwakubo, and the Futurelab's "Shadowgram" were Ars Electronica's three contributions to this year's donumenta in Regensburg, the theme of which was "Fragments Broaching the Imagination."

"Possible Futures" was the topic of an international conference at the University of Sao Paulo, to which Ars Electronica was invited to present the Prix Archive that had made its debut online in conjunction with the Festival in September. This served as the starting point of discussions with scientists, artists and historians about the current state of digital archiving and potential future developments.

Finally, Ars Electronica curated and produced a very large exhibition at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts Taichung—"Collective Wisdom" consisted of 17 works by renowned artists from Taiwan, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Italy and Austria.

171,000 visitors in the Ars Electronica Center

With Museum of the Future attendance projected at 148,000 and 23,000 guests attending events held in the Ars Electronica Center, visitor numbers have remained consistently high since 2010. The two biggest attractions have been "Out of Control," an exhibition about data security and internet users' privacy issues that's still running at the AEC, and the Deep Space LIVE series of weekly expert talks accompanied by spectacular high-definition graphics on such topics as art history, extreme sports, astronomy and "Linz Then and Now."

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Futurelab created “TimeSpace” for Vienna International Airport ...

“ZeitRaum” (TimeSpace) is an impressive interactive installation conceived by the Ars Electronica Futurelab and set up in early June at Vienna International Airport’s new terminal. It’s a real-time interpretation of arriving and departing flights. The work consists of several stations dispersed throughout the terminal in order to accompany passengers on the way to their gates. The installation’s hub is an imaginary space that interconnects all the world’s airports. Vienna International Airport also uses TimeSpace as an advertizing medium for half the available time.

... and established a new project revenue record

In addition to this major commission from Vienna International Airport and the artistic direction of this year’s voestalpine Klangwolke, the Futurelab completed a whole series of additional projects in 2012 including an immersive presentation setup for Swarovski in Wattens, Tyrol, the Inspiration Pavilion for SAP’s German headquarters in Walldorf, a 3-D Lab for Schattdecor, Mobile Terminals for Kaindl, and a wide variety of other assignments from MED-EL, the Chamber of Commerce of the Province of Upper Austria, Volkswagen AG and the Toshiba Corporation Design Center. The Futurelab’s revenues topped €4.5 million, a 99% increase over 2011. In order to even further enhance Ars Electronica’s marketing efforts, the respective areas of activity of the Futurelab and AE Solutions divisions are being reorganized. From now on, AE Solutions will be responsible for procuring new assignments and their implementation, which will allow Futurelab crew members to totally focus on creative input and applying staffers’ artistic, scientific and technological expertise.

AE Solutions hit the ground running

After having wrapped up its first full year of operations with an impressive revenue figure of €500,000, AE Solutions is now prepared to make more good things happen with a detailed business plan and a substantially strengthened staff. The emphasis will be on three sectors: event & show design, brandlands & exhibitions, and shop experience. The aim is to take advantage of synergies involving the Ars Electronica Futurelab, and to develop that division’s results and prototypes into marketable products. AE Solutions is headquartered in Linz’s Tabakfabrik, a former tobacco processing plant where a space has been custom-tailored to AE Solutions’ needs. The spacious Tabakfabrik is an ideal setting, since there’s lots of room to accommodate AE Solutions’ future growth, and the facility is also home to lots of other dynamic young enterprises in the creative sector. The 2013 revenue target is €2 million.

Ars Electronica Linz: <http://www.aec.at/news/en/>

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