

Short documentary film about the 2016 Ars Electronica Festival

The Alchemy Box

(Linz, February 16, 2017) The 2016 Ars Electronica Festival was the setting of a 20-minute documentary film created by nine physically handicapped participants in FAB's Virtual Office program. "The Alchemy Box" captures the hustle & bustle amidst the festival's POSTCITY venue, and guests' and artists' reactions to what was going on. The most prominent protagonist was Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern, who spontaneously—and to the great surprise of the filmmakers—agreed to an interview. "The Alchemy Box" premieres at Deep Space LIVE this evening at 7 PM, and will be a regular part of the Deep Space lineup.

Idea and Preparation

The prolog: FAB-Association to Promote Work and Occupation already had a solid track record collaborating with the Ars Electronica Festival's u19 – CREATE YOUR WORLD festival within a festival for young people. And this gave birth to an idea in early 2016 for a film crew to capture what was happening at the 2016 festival. The next step was getting a competent director on board: media designer Bettina Gangl. Then, the nine young participants in FAB's Virtual Office initiative were chosen as her crew: Nicole Höflinger, Anamaria Zupancic, Isabelle Oceanssek, Susanne Strigl, Ivan Solumun, Tobias Huber, Arber Tafilaj, Marcel Bernsteiner and Wolfgang Winter. The group first received an orientation on the festival theme, alchemy, and the role it played in bygone days. In preparation for the shoot, the crew attended a workshop at the Medien Kulturhaus in Wels, Upper Austria to learn about interviewing, the equipment, film editing and directing.

Film Shoot during the Festival

On September 8th, the young film crew kicked off Day 1 of the festival with a group breakfast. Despite some initial jitters, the first two interviews came off well. The next day, Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern paid a call on POSTCITY and spontaneously agreed to an interview. In addition to chats with visitors and participating artists from Austria and abroad, there were Q&A sessions with festival director Martin Honzik, State Commissioner Rudi Anschober and former Federal Minister Josef Ostermayer. On the final day of the festival, the crew filmed diverse transitional sequences and even had a bit of time to take in the POSTCITY venue from a visitor's point of view. At the start, considerable nervousness had been evident on the part of many in the crew, but they quickly got into the swing of things and were seasoned veterans by the time the wrap party rolled around.

The Alchemy Box – Before & After?

Over the course of the film shoot, these nine young individuals grew together into a well-functioning crew. They gradually got over their initial anxieties—for instance, trepidations about addressing strangers—and learned to rely on their crewmates. Having successfully brought their ambitious film project to fruition also manifested itself in the form of greater self-confidence.

FAB – Association to Promote Work and Occupation

FAB is a nationwide organization whose aim is to help people with disabilities make the best of their situation in the world of work. Self-determination, self-guidance and individual responsibility are the watchwords. With its programs, FAB makes a significant contribution to providing equal opportunities for all and to implementing labor market policies that are successful and guided by social welfare considerations. FAB is a non-profit affiliated with the BBRZ group of organizations.

Virtual Office of FAB Linz

Virtual Office is a three-year program that targets young people whose disabilities prevent them from pursuing a regular profession that demands specific manual skills. Most of them have a spastic condition, muscular disease or genetically caused neurological disorder. For these young people, working with computers opens up possibilities that would otherwise be denied them. Mastery of a computer not only increases their quality of life; it also offers them a meaningful occupation and fosters their potential. Accordingly, Virtual Office focuses on, among other skills, working with word processing, presentation and spreadsheet software, utilizing the internet, digitizing documents, audio & video processing, image processing and the layout of publications. The aim of this training program is to provide participants with skills that qualify them for the labor market or employment in a subsidized environment.

Ars Electronica Festival

Once a year, Ars Electronica invites artists, scientists and researchers from all over the world to a conclave in Linz to confront a specific, interdisciplinary theme in the context of speeches, workshops, exhibitions and symposia. Each year's festival is dedicated to a different theme, and the formats of the various approaches to it are the very opposite of sacrosanct. This is a setting for experimentation, evaluation and reinvention, for the search for that which advances the betterment of human society. By the way—the next Ars Electronica Festival is set for September 7-11, 2017. And maybe an FAB film crew will be on hand once again!

FAB: <http://www.fab.at/de.html>

FAB Virtual Office: <http://www.fab.at/de/unsere-angebote/projects/show/virtual-office.html>

Short version of The Alchemy Box: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NB63gyYfaIQ>

Ars Electronica Festival 2016: <http://www.aec.at/radicalatoms/en/>

U19 – CREATE YOUR WORLD: <http://www.aec.at/u19/en/prix/>