Ars Electronica: 25 Years of the Digital Avant-Garde

Celebrating 25 years of Ars Electronica. The panel provides not just interesting historical information, but also comprehensive insight into new directions of digital art.

Since its invention in 1979, Ars Electronica has maintained its strong focus on the crossovers between art and technology. With each annual edition of its Festival for Art, Technology and Society, Ars Electronica has become more and more an international meeting point for the ever-growing community of people interested in digital art, its practises, and its theories. The festival advanced from an insiders' event for pioneers and early adopters to the major event of the international digital art circus.

Ars Electronica also developed a strong influence on the local level and became a major driving force in Linz, Austria's process of transformation from a city based on the aging steel industry to a new economy of innovative technologies and industries, and it became an icon for Linz's new identity as a modern cultural city.

Ars Electronica established a unique dialogue between artists and scientists to explore the possibilities of digital technology and to encourage critical awareness of its cultural and social impact. Emerging technologies, new artistic practises, and advanced theories have very often found their first large public presentation at the annual Ars Electronica Festival.

In 1987, Prix Ars Electronica was introduced as the first international art competition dedicated exclusively to digital arts. It was the logical next step for Ars Electronica and an immediate success, not least because of its significant prize money and its high profile among jurors and award winners. Over the past 17 years, about 30,000 works have been submitted to this annual competition, and prizes totalling SUS1.7 million have been presented to artists. The Prix contributed essentially to the building of Ars Electronica's large international reputation and its network of partners, friends, and collaborators.

With the opening of the Ars Electronica Center in 1996, Ars Electronica's field of operation was significantly redirected toward the general public and development of new forms of collaboration among art, science, and the general population. The Center resembles a prototype for a fully interactive museum and acts as a successful educational and cultural centre for a broad spectrum of audiences. It features frequently changing exhibits of outstanding media art works and innovative research projects from artists and media laboratories all over the world.

The Ars Electronica Futurelab, also founded in 1996, is an internationally acclaimed model for interdisciplinary collaboration among artists, designers, engineers, and researchers from the academic and commercial communities.

High-profile artists-in-residence projects as well as top-level research projects with large corporations provide a very inspiring and challenging foundation for any type of creative work in new technologies.

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