



PRESSEINFORMATION

● 07.09.2021

● CYBERARTS Prix Ars Electronica Exhibition 07. –12.09.2021

The OK in the OÖ Kulturquartier (meanwhile part of the OÖ Landes-Kultur gmbH) has been presenting the CyberArts exhibition since 1998. As a showcase for the Prix Ars Electronica winners, it is an excellent platform from which to observe current developments and trends in our digital age, with a special focus on their social and economic impact. The selected works exemplify the social dynamics and issues that are dominating today's discourse. This year's exhibition shows 20 award-winning and distinguished works from the categories Computer Animation, Digital Musics & Sound Art and Artificial Intelligence & Life Art.

Artificial Intelligence & Life Art is dedicated to artistic practice and thinking related with all areas of Artificial Intelligence and Life Sciences. Rewarded are artworks engaging critically and highly qualitative with Biotech, Genetic Engineering, Life Sciences as well as Robotic and Kinetic, Machine Learning, Deep Learning and any other form of Artificial Intelligence Research.

Starting in 1987 the category for Computer Music has changed in keeping with digital development. **Digital Musics & Sound Art** now distinguishes contemporary digital sound production from the broad spectrum of electronically generated music, works combining sound, media and music, digital compositions ranging from electro-acoustic to experimental, and sound installations. Artists also deal critically with the seemingly obsolete relationship of digital and analog, the original, man and machine. And as Artificial Intelligence is entering the field of music production.

The **Computer Animation** category has been part of the Prix Ars Electronica since its very inception, and its development continues to display strength and vitality. It recognizes excellence in independent work in the arts and sciences as well as in high-end commercial productions in the film, advertising and entertainment industries. In this category, artistic originality counts just as much as masterful technical achievement.

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DIGITAL MUSICS & SOUND ART
Honorary Mention

XOÁN-XIL LÓPEZ / ES
ORGANSCAPE, 2020

Based on research into the special stops found in some organs, mainly during the Baroque period, that were designed to imitate para-musical sounds such as those of birds or thunder, *Organscape* delves into how we attempt to represent our audible environment. The project consists of two elements that coexist and enter into a dialogue: a series of works composed by converting field recordings from different geographical locations to sounds characteristic of this historical instrument, and a sound installation called Organismo I, a sort of automaton that emulates a repertoire of sounds associated with the natural world and which, in this initial approach, focuses on mechanical bird song. In this sense, *Organscape* is not so much an attempt to achieve a faithful imitation but rather to outline certain acoustic characteristics of the evoked material.

Installation & documentation (34' 34")

Comissioned by the international organ festival De Lugares e Órganos, Santiago de Compostela, 2020
unruidosecreto.net/organscape/

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COMPUTER ANIMATION
Honorary Mention

L.A. RAEVEN AND ELLEN DE BRUIJNE PROJECTS / NL
VASTUM, 2020

How will our society deal with old age and disease when human optimization through genetic engineering has become a possibility? In *Vastum*, the artist duo L.A. Raeven (Liesbeth and Angelique Raeven) portray the fear of aging and degeneration. The video installation shows a girl with progeria, a rare genetic disorder that causes premature aging. For *Vastum*, the Latin word for waste, L.A. Raeven made a digital cross between a progeria patient and a laboratory rat. Trapped like a rat, the animal-like girl bangs against her cabin, trying to escape the leering gazes of the public. Using state-of-the-art computer technology, the artists ask uncomfortable questions about the development of our society in the face of relentless scientific progress.

video installation

With support from: Mondriaanfonds

courtesy the artists and Ellen de Bruijne Projects

laraeven.net

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COMPUTER ANIMATION

Honorary Mention

PETER BURR / US

DIRTSCRAPER, 2020

Dirtscrapper tells the story of a decaying underground megastructure—a digital portrait of a sick building. Through text pop-ups, members of its virtual community talk about their surroundings, relationships, and mental health in an attempt to quell the constant noise of their precarious circumstances. Taken as a whole, the artwork emulates a collective body subjected to the inner workings of a gridded simulation: housing blocks are overrun by industry, residents are displaced, and the individual withers. What remains is the story of a constantly kinetic city and the people that persist as its inhabitants.

Originally, this work was built as an installation. In 2020 it was translated into a livestream edition: a week-long zero-player video game livestream at bitforms gallery. Controlled by an artificial intelligence, the piece continuously evolves, presenting new stories, architectural arrangements, and perspectives during the stream.

video installation (1' 26")

peterburr.org

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DIGITAL MUSICS & SOUND ART

Award of Distiction

RASHIN FAHANDEJ / US

A FATHER'S LULLABY, 2019 ONGOING

A Father's Lullaby is a "poetic movement" in which art and technology mobilize a plethora of voices while utilizing public places and virtual spaces. The project addresses the unequal treatment of prisoners in the USA based on ethnic origin (as well as the disparity in the rate of imprisonment) and the impact of this situation on children, women, and low-income communities. The installation consists of different layers of sound: a series of compositions based on lullabies contributed by fathers and a touch-activated sound station with audio/light panels that unfolds many different stories.

Songs and lullabies collected via a website, as well as interviews with men on probation, tell of the structural violence of male-dominated mass imprisonment, but also of love and trauma, presence and absence, and the power of personal memories.

A Father's Lullaby is also presented In Kepler's Gardens / Campus of the Johannes Kepler University.

Installation

rashinfahandej.com

fatherslullaby.org

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COMPUTER ANIMATION
Award of Distinction

VENETA ANDROVA / BG
AIVA, 2020

Within the context of a clichéd “art documentary,” the animation puts the spotlight on AI artist *AIVA*. Viewers get a glimpse of *AIVA*’s studio and watch her study and paint a nude male model while commenting on his beauty and perfection. The animation concludes with *AIVA* at her own exhibition, surrounded by gallery owners and her team of engineers. The audience learns that all of her exhibited works have been sold, fetching over a million dollars. With her animation, Veneta Androva addresses the systematic discrimination of women in art and the myth of the male genius that still prevails. The film also focuses on the lack of female perspectives in the field of artificial intelligence today and shows what this amounts to: a world where algorithms that satisfy human – male – needs are portrayed as female – whether it’s Siri, Alexa, Cortana, Samantha, or Ai-Da.

video installation (13’)
venetaandrova.com

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & LIFE ART
Honorary Mention

THERESA SCHUBERT / DE
SOUND FOR FUNGI. HOMAGE TO INDETERMINACY, 2020

Sound for Fungi. Homage to Indeterminacy began as a laboratory experiment in which Schubert played sinus frequencies to fungi mycelia she collected from forests near her home in Berlin. After weeks of observing, most of them showed a positive response to the influence of sound by growing faster and denser than samples grown in silence. The interactive and generative video installation simulates Schubert’s experiment. Audiences can explore this biological process by using a tracking sensor, whereby hand movements simulate the role of a sound frequency and change the fungi’s growth in real time.

The title refers to the American composer John Cage’s development of “indeterminacy” as an improvisational technique in which aspects of a composition are left open to chance, nature, or free choice. Improvisation – not so much as a musical process but understood as a natural life phenomenon – represents a condition of existence itself. With her work, the artist facilitates an interspecies experience which works best when visitors bring tranquility and patience to their interaction.

Installation
Studio assistant: Simona Dossi
Simulation development: Sage Jenson
Produced within the “Mind the Fungi” research project by TU Berlin and ALB
theresaschubert.com

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COMPUTER ANIMATION
Golden Nica

GUANGLI LIU / CN
WHEN THE SEA SENDS FORTH A FOREST, 2020

Guangli Liu's work *When the Sea Sends Forth a Forest* is dedicated to the forgotten history of the Chinese inhabitants of Cambodia, who were persecuted, expelled, and killed by the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s and abandoned by China. In view of the lack of historical footage from the country, which was at the time completely isolated from the outside world, Liu uses the regime's propaganda videos as well as the horrific images that made their way around the world after its fall. By interweaving the old recordings with 3D images generated by a game engine, Liu tells a vivid tale. Narrated by a contemporary witness, a tender, personal history unfurls as a virtual reality reconstruction of a recent past.

video installation (20')

Produced by Le Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains

liuguangli.net

liuguangli.net/whentheseseasends.html

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & LIFE ART
Golden Nica

FORENSIC ARCHITECTURE / INT
CLOUD STUDIES, 2020

Forensic Architecture is a research agency comprising architects, artists, filmmakers, journalists, lawyers, scientists, and software developers that investigates state and corporate violence. The agency's investigations employ pioneering techniques in the fields of spatial and architectural analysis, open source investigation, and immersive technologies. The FA team investigates, explores, and exposes how power reshapes the very air we breathe.

Tear gas is used to disperse bodies gathering in democratic protest, white phosphorus and chlorine gas are used to spread terror in cities, herbicide is sprayed from airplanes to destroy fields and displace those whose livelihood depends on them, arson is used to eradicate forests for industrial plantations. Mobilized by state and corporate powers, toxic clouds colonize the air we breathe.

Cloud Studies brings together eight recent investigations by Forensic Architecture, each examining different types of toxic clouds and the capacity of states and corporations to occupy airspace and create unlivable atmospheres. Combining digital modelling, machine learning, fluid dynamics, and mathematical simulation in the context of active casework, it serves as a platform for new human rights research practices directed at those increasingly prevalent modes of "cloud-based," airborne violence.

2-channel video installation (23' 28")

multi-channel video installation on 5 monitors, length: various

Originally commissioned by ZKM Centre for Art and Media in Karlsruhe

forensic-architecture.org/investigation/cloudstudies

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & LIFE ART
Honorary Mention

PAOLO CIRIO / IT
CAPTURE, 2020

Paolo Cirio's works embody the contradictions, ethics, limits, and potentials inherent in the social complexity of information society through a provocative, critical, and proactive approach—as seen in his projects about Google and Facebook. *Capture* examines facial recognition as used in Europe by authorities and companies without a clear legal framework. The artist used facial recognition software to filter out the faces of 4,000 police officers from over 1,000 photos taken during protests in France. Using crowdsourcing, he identified them by name on an online platform and posted the officers' headshots as street art posters throughout Paris. This deliberately provocative action comments on the potential of facial recognition and artificial intelligence. The lack of privacy regulations for such technology eventually turns it against the same authorities that urge its use. This provocation triggered reactions by France's Interior Minister and the police unions, leading to the censorship of the artwork.

Installation, Video

co-production between Le Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains in Fresnoy and La Condition Publique in Roubaix, France.

paolocirio.net; ban-facial-recognition.eu

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & LIFE ART
Award of Distinction

TRANXXENO LAB / ADRIANA KNOUF / US
TX-1, 2020

While we (humans) refer to potential life in outer space as “aliens,” queer and transgender life on Earth is likewise still often referred to as “alien.” *tranxxeno lab* by Adriana Knouf addresses the biochemical requirements of transgender persons in outer space, especially their need for hormone replacement medication. *TX-1* launched bits of these medications to the International Space Station (ISS), marking the first-known time that elements of the transgender experience orbited the Earth. *TX-1* includes a fragment of Knouf's spironolactone pill, a slice of her estradiol patch, and a miniature paper sculpture, as a gesture towards the absent-yet-present xenoentities of the cosmos. A symbolic exodus, the return of *TX-1* to Earth was also a sign of resilience.

The project draws attention to the fact that all human bodies are subject to individual, societal, and environmental changes, and that all people need support and care for their survival—whether on Earth or in space.

Installation

TX-1 box design and modeling: Felipe Rebolledo; Machining: Jože Zajc, David Pilipović

TX-1 was selected through MIT Media Lab Space Exploration Initiative's first international artwork open call to the ISS and the launch opportunity was provided by the initiative. It flew to the ISS as part of *Sojourner2020* which included eight other artist groups. Additional support: Northeastern University.

zeitkunst.org | tranxxenolab.net/projects/tx-1

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DIGITAL MUSICS & SOUND ART
Golden Nica

**ALEXANDER SCHUBERT / DE
CONVERGENCE, 2020/21**

Convergence is a performance in which human musicians and their AI-generated avatars play together. A computer voice gives commands, scans the people on the stage, and creates digital images on canvases in the dark space. These characters are fed by synthesized image and sound data, from which the artificial intelligence then shapes the process. Neither the musicians nor the composer know in advance what effect these images and their music will have—it only becomes clear at the moment of the performance and has something threatening about it due to the screams requested by the AI. The machine intervenes in this cycle of action and reaction with its own algorithms and becomes an even stronger counterpart to self-perception. Alexander Schubert translates this plot with his large team of developers, AI experts, the Ensemble Resonanz, and the IRCAM team into an exciting musical theater performance of about 30 minutes that triggers both anxiety and fascination.

Documentation (30')

Ensemble Resonanz, Co-developed with IRCAM, Paris

Audio Deep Learning Programming: Antoine Caillon, Philippe Esling, Benjamin Levy (Ircam)

Video Deep Learning Programming: Jorge Davila-Chacon (Heldenkombinat)

Developed as part of #bebeethoven, a project of PODIUM Esslingen.

Funded by Kulturstiftung des Bundes. Digital version commissioned by Eclat Festival.

alexanderschubert.net

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ISAO TOMITA SPECIAL PRIZE 2021

**KHYAM ALLAMI & COUNTERPOINT / GB & INT
APOTOME, 2021 ONGOING**

Apotome is a music project highlighting the cultural asymmetries, biases, and non-neutrality inherent in modern music-making tools, alongside their interconnected web of musical, educational, cultural, social, and political ramifications. Created by Khyam Allami and Counterpoint, the creative studio of Tero Parviainen and Samuel Diggins, it looks at two browser-based non-commercial applications: Apotome, a generative music system focusing on transcultural tunings and their subsets (scales/modes), and its sister application Leimma, which allows for the exploration and creation of such tunings. The project offers tools that go beyond the Western canon and is accompanied by video tutorials encouraging users to explore and use the software with an open mind.

Documentation

isartum.net

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DIGITAL MUSICS & SOUND ART
Award of Distinction

DOUGLAS McCAUSLAND / US
CONVERGENCE, 2020

Convergence features a duet between composer and electronics performer Douglas McCausland and augmented double bassist Aleksander Gabrys. The duet begins as a collaboration and equal conversation but shifts dramatically towards the electronics performer controlling the bassist. The bass is fitted with eight microphones and eight transducers, allowing it to serve both as the generator for unusual and extreme sounds and as a resonance chamber for external sounds. Meanwhile, machine learning is used to classify gestures by the electronics performer via a sensor glove, linking these to audio controls. The performers explore the sonic and performative extremes of this complex system, as well as the liminal spaces that exist in between.

Installation
douglas-mccausland.net

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & LIFE ART
Honorary Mention

VERA TOLAZZI / AT, MATHIAS GARTNER / AT
THE TRANSPARENCY OF RANDOMNESS, 2020

In this interactive installation, visitors can directly experience the significance of the complex interplay of randomness and stochastics in current mathematical and physical research. 27 transparent boxes, floating in space, continuously generate random numbers by using the well-known medium of dice. The process of random number generation is influenced by the complexity of nature and its structures, using a variety of natural materials such as cinnamon, moss, cotton, and cork that have special haptic properties like being soft, rough, hard-edged, or fluffy. Each roll of the dice thus takes on completely different characteristics.

Visitors have the opportunity to control one of the boxes by accessing a web application and therefore become an active part of the installation with their self-generated random number. The ensemble of all generated random numbers forms the basis for a real-time calculation and generative graphics.

With this project the artists want to demonstrate the importance of random numbers in various fields of research, such as artificial intelligence, physics, computer simulations, and machine learning.

Support received from: Land Oberösterreich and Johannes Kepler University Linz
veratolazzi.com

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & LIFE ART
Award of Distinction

MASHARU / NL / RU
MUSEUM OF EDIBLE EARTH, 2017 ONGOING

The Museum of Edible Earth is a cross-disciplinary project with, at its core, a collection of 400 samples of types of earth that are eaten for various reasons by different people across the globe. It invites the audience to physically question our relationship to the environment and the Earth, and to review our knowledge about food and cultural traditions using creative thinking. Masharu aims to re-introduce geophagy—the practice of eating earth and earth-like substances, such as clay and chalk, an ancient spiritual and healing practice in various countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The Museum of Edible Earth is also presented in Kepler's Gardens / Campus of the Johannes Kepler University.

SasaHara (FR), project manager
masharu.nl
museumofedible.earth

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & LIFE ART
Honorary Mention

ALLISON PARRISH / US
COMPASSES, 2019

A machine learning model of spelling and phonetics invents new words in negative spaces between supposedly discrete categories. The model was trained by Allison Parrish with two parts: a “speller,” which spells words based on how they sound, and a “sunder-out,” which sounds out words based on how they're spelled. In the process of sounding out a word, the “sunder-out” produces a fixed-length numerical vector, known as a “hidden state,” which is essentially a condensed representation of a word's phonetics. The “speller” can then use the phonetic information contained in this hidden state to produce a plausible spelling of the word. *Compasses* is a collection of poems resulting from this process.

Installation portfolio.decontextualize.
com/#compasses

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COMPUTER ANIMATION
Award of Distinction

ERICK OH / US
OPERA, 2020

OPERA is a massive animation installation that portrays our society and history with all its diversity of beauty and absurdity. A civilization rises and falls (and rises again) in a continuous movement. The animated film can be seen as a contemporary animated development inspired by Renaissance fresco paintings and artists such as Bosch, Michelangelo, and Botticelli. With myriad details, Erick Oh recounts a repetitive human history and provides insights into the range of human emotions. His *OPERA* is hopeful, funny, thoughtful, frightening, and sad all at once. It challenges us to question the mechanisms of society and our own behavior, and to learn from the past.

video installation
opera.beastsandnatives.com

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & LIFE ART
Honorary Mention

DREAD SCOTT / US
SLAVE REBELLION REENACTMENT, 2019/21

Slave Rebellion Reenactment (SRR) is a community-engaged artist performance and film production that, in November 2019, reimagined the German Coast Uprising of 1811 – the largest rebellion of enslaved people in US history. Envisioned and organized by artist Dread Scott and documented by filmmaker John Akomfrah, SRR animated a suppressed historical event with an audacious plan to organize and seize Orleans Territory, to fight not just for their own emancipation but to end slavery. In contrast to many war reenactments, much of SRR was a procession that was jarringly out of place, as over 300 people, many on horses, armed with prop weapons, in 19th-century garments, advanced past the gated communities, mobile homes, fast food restaurants, and oil refineries. SRR initiated several recruitment and organizing meetings that took the form of conversations about why people chose to participate and why this history is important in contemporary society. What would success have meant for US and world history? This project wants to help people of all races to rethink long-held assumptions and broaden their vision of what is possible.

Installation & Video
slave-revolt.com

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & LIFE ART
Honorary Mention

**FELIX LENZ / AT, ANGELA NEUBAUER / AT, ESZTER ZWICKL / HU
THE CLEANROOM PARADOX, 2020**

The Cleanroom Paradox dismantles the deceptively pristine image of the high-tech industry and unveils the systemic suppression of occupational, toxic hazards at semiconductor production sites. Jin is a former Samsung factory worker whose employer failed to acknowledge the lack of adequate precautionary health measures during work procedures. After her time in the industry, she is left alone to deal with the drastic consequences: a kidney cancer diagnosis. The work comprises a gradually disintegrating, custom print of Jin and a video documenting the portrait's creation. The video essay is superimposed with her own as well as experts' personal stories, shedding light on the industry's latent practices. The artists use chemically dissolved smartphones as ink for screen printing the worker's portrait. Analogous to the industry's etching processes, the toxic agent will corrode the print over time, skinning a surface whose lower layers are already inscribed with Jin's story.

Installation & Video (11' 03")

Produced at and supported by: Design Investigations (ID2), University of Applied Arts Vienna
felixlenz.at

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & LIFE ART
Honorary Mention

**ŠPELA PETRIČ / SI
PL'AI, 2020**

PL'AI by the scientist and media artist Špela Petrič explores the possibility of play between cucumber plants and an AI robot. As they grow, cucumbers search for surfaces to grab hold of, their tendrils slowly swaying through the air. A robot approaches the plants with 36 individually controlled wires suspended from above, moving only as fast as the tendrils of the plants. It senses the cucumbers and feeds the images through a neural network, which in turn decides how to approach the plants by moving the colored balls. With each touch, the cucumbers impact the algorithm and gradually transform the robot's steel tendrils into a trellis that supports their growth. The play between the cucumber and robot leaves morphological traces in the shape of the plants, the steel strings, and the neural network. A time-lapse recording of the last 24 hours of play, which captures the tendrils' and balls' movement, shows this process.

produced by Kapelica Gallery / Kersnikova Institute
spelapetric.org/#!/plai

CYBERARTS Prix Ars Electronica Exhibition

Opening hours

07.–12. September
daily from 10.00 to 19:00

Admission to the exhibition HÖHENRAUSCH! On the rooftop is free for visitors of the CyberArts 2021 exhibition.

OÖ Kulturquartier

OK Platz 1, 4020 Linz
T: +43(0)732/784178-0
E-Mail: info@oekulturquartier.at
www.oekulturquartier.at

press information

OÖ Kulturquartier

Maria Falkinger
T: +43(0)732/7720-52540
E-Mail: maria.falkinger-hoertner@oelkg.at

Photos for Download: <http://www.oekulturquartier.at/presse/>

The whole program of this years Ars Electronica 2021:

<https://ars.electronica.art/newdigitaldeal/de/>