

NEGOTIATING HUMANITY:

Award-winning Works from Prix Ars Electronica & S+T+ARTS Prize 2026

Press Tour, September 8, 2026 with

Dietmar Prammer, Mayor of the City of Linz and Owner Representative of Ars Electronica

Doris Lang-Mayerhofer, City Councilor for Culture and Chair of the Ars Electronica Advisory Board

Hemma Schmutz, Artistic Director Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz

Christl Baur, Head of Ars Electronica Festival & Program Director

Gerfried Stocker, Artistic Director Ars Electronica

Press Release
Linz, September 8, 2026

NEGOTIATING HUMANITY

Festival for Art, Technology and Society
September 9-13, 2026
Linz, Austria

Amid profound change and growing uncertainty, Ars Electronica 2026 asks what it actually means to be human. The Festival does not see itself as a forum in which conclusive answers are found, but as a space for reflection and discussion that inspires new perspectives and, in doing so, becomes a catalyst for change. At its heart lies the capacity for dialogue and for conflict, the culture of conflict we need in order to negotiate our humanity anew, again and again.

NEGOTIATING HUMANITY: Award-Winning Works at the Lentos Kunstmuseum

Four projects honored at the Prix Ars Electronica and two recognized by the European Commission's S+T+ARTS Prize are on view at the Lentos Kunstmuseum from September 9 to 13. They illuminate the Festival theme from a range of perspectives: from bodily perception to the logic of capitalist technologies and the new autonomous creativity of artificial intelligence, through to history, geopolitics and the climate crisis. The works make visible that what we take to be "human" is nothing fixed or static, but something in constant flux.

The artists themselves stand at the forefront of this ongoing negotiation. Their works open up insights that are often counterintuitive and contradictory. They shake certainties and unsettle us, and at the same time they give courage. They arise from an artistic stance and an awareness that time (our past and our future), space (the local and the global) and different

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forms of being (the human and the non-human) are inextricably interwoven, shaping the very reality within which we conceive of ourselves as human.

Prix Ars Electronica: A Seismograph of Artistic, Technological and Social Change

Launched in 1987, the Prix Ars Electronica is the world's most time-honored competition for media art. Its reputation is due not least to its top-caliber jury, which each year reviews thousands of submissions from all over the world and, in an elaborate process, selects the very best of them for awards. In each category, two Awards of Distinction and several Honorary Mentions are presented alongside the Golden Nicas. The u19–create your world category additionally features main prizes for young creatives in the u10, u12 and u14 age groups.

In 2026, 4,329 works from 106 countries were submitted to the Prix Ars Electronica. This year's jury comprised Mona Kasra (US), Ari Melenciano (US), Leonhard Müllner (AT), Christoph Terhechte (DE), TZUSOO (KR), Ian Banerjee (IN/AT), Yun-Cheng Chen (TW), Marta Handenawer (ES), Esther Mwema (ZM), Thomas Kloiber (AT), Jussi Ängeslevä (FI/US), Paula Gaetano Adi (AR), Aisling Murray (IE), Julia Staudach (AT), Elliot Woods (GB/KR), Sirikit Amann (AT), Sophia Hochedlinger (AT), Conny Lee (AT), Mary Mayrhofer (AT) and Yasmo (AT).

In the category New Animation Art (1,144 submissions), Andrew Herzog (US) won the Golden Nica for *Deer Hunter*. In the category Digital Humanity (754 submissions), presented in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, Summit-Share and the Shared Histories Team (SE/ZM) prevailed with the project *Open Digital Infrastructure for Shared Histories Cultural Heritage*. In the category Interactive Art + (1,757 submissions), Forensic Architecture (GB) was honored for the project *A Cartography of Genocide: Israel's Conduct in Gaza Since October 2023*. In the category u19–create your world (674 submissions), Jannis Berner (AT) received the Golden Nica for *Reverse Rendering*.

S+T+ARTS PRIZE '26

The eleventh edition of the STARTS Prize was also the final competition held within the framework of the S+T+ARTS initiative (Science, Technology and the Arts). In 2026 the prize recorded a record 2,719 submissions from 110 countries, underscoring its global significance as one of Europe's leading awards for interdisciplinary innovation.

The Grand Prize – Innovative Collaboration, endowed with 20,000 euros, went this time to artist Agnes Meyer-Brandis (DE) for her long-term interdisciplinary art and research project *Office for Tree Migration (OTM)*. The Grand Prize – Artistic Exploration, likewise endowed with

20,000 euros, was won by Hito Steyerl (DE) for her project *Mechanical Kurds*. Both winning projects embody the mission of the STARTS Prize: they bring artistic perspectives into dialogue with science and technology in order to address pressing societal challenges.

This year's laureates were selected by an international jury made up of Giulia Bini (IT), Fernando Cucchiatti (AR/ES), Ralph Dum (AT), Markus Reymann (DE) and Ambra Trotto (IT/SE).

Prix Ars Electronica Award Ceremony 2026

September 10, 2026 | 19:30 – 21:30 (doors open at 18:45) | Design Center Linz

The Prix Ars Electronica award ceremony at the Design Center Linz is one of the highlights of the Festival week. This evening puts art center stage, and with it the outstanding artists honored with a Golden Nica of the Prix Ars Electronica in 2026. The winners of the STARTS Prize, the "AI for Social Impact" initiative and "State of the ART(ist)" are also invited onto the stage.

Tours During the Festival Week

September 9–13, 2026 | Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz

The exhibition *NEGOTIATING HUMANITY* at the Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz can be visited individually or as part of a range of guided tours:

Daily Spotlight Tours (EN, DE): Guided tours through the exhibition in German or English, focusing on its highlights.

Artist Walk Tour (EN): On Friday, September 11, from 16:00 to 17:30, Emiko Ogawa (JP/AT), Head of Prix Ars Electronica, guides visitors through the exhibition together with artists Andrew Herzog (US) and Hito Steyerl (DE).

Expert Tour (DE): On Saturday, September 12, from 11:00 to 12:30, Christl Baur (AT/DE), Head of Ars Electronica Festival, offers insights into the curatorial work and the selection process behind the exhibition.

Artist Walk Tour (EN): On Saturday, September 12, from 16:00 to 17:30, Emiko Ogawa (JP/AT), Head of Prix Ars Electronica, guides visitors through the exhibition together with SummitShare (SE/ZM) and artists Agnes Meyer-Brandis (DE) and Shin Hanagata (JP).

Expert Tour (EN): On Sunday, September 13, from 10:00 to 11:30, Emiko Ogawa (JP/AT), Head of Prix Ars Electronica, offers insights into the curatorial work and the selection process behind the exhibition.

NEGOTIATING HUMANITY:

Award-Winning Works from Prix Ars Electronica & S+T+ARTS Prize 2026

S+T+ARTS Prize '26

Grand Prize – Artistic Exploration

Mechanical Kurds, Hito Steyerl (DE)

Grand Prize – Innovative Collaboration

Office for Tree Migration (OTM), Agnes Meyer-Brandis (DE)

New Animation Art

Golden Nica

Deer Hunter, Andrew Herzog (US)

Interactive Art +

Golden Nica

A Cartography of Genocide: Israel's Conduct in Gaza Since October 2023, Forensic Architecture (GB)

Award of Distinction

CHIMERIA, Shin Hanagata (JP)

Digital Humanity

Golden Nica

What the Record Forgot, Shared Histories Team (SE/ZM), SummitShare (ZM)

CHIMERIA

Shin Hanagata (JP)

Algorithms reduce the body to an interchangeable module, and in doing so the eye becomes the central input medium of labor and consumption. Using a camera and a head-mounted display, *CHIMERIA* relocates this eye to another part of the body, as an embodied practice of rebirth as a chimera. When the eye migrates to the toes, the feet become the head and the legs the neck: the familiar body schema dissolves.

Five volunteers put this to the test over two weeks in a house in Tokyo. Everyday objects, designed for "people with eyes in their heads," became unusable to them. They took in liquid food through a tube near the eye and invented a toilet that allowed them to urinate from the knees. Because cities are geared toward a standardized body, everyday situations are disrupted. In the middle of the anthropocentric city, a "chimera-centered zone" thus emerged, giving rise to new forms of movement and adaptation as well as altered routines.

CHIMERIA understands this practice as a critical engagement with bodily norms and technological control. It shows how bodies and perception can be transformed by simple technologies, producing a temporary alternative reality in which "normality" and "otherness" become unstable. Performances take place during the Festival under the canopy of the Lentos Kunstmuseum, inviting visitors to step into the space of the chimera.

Performance Times:

WED, Sept 9.: 13:00–15:00 und 16:00–18:00

THU, Sept 10.: 13:00–15:00

FRI, Sept 11.: 13:00–15:00 und 16:00–18:00

SAT, Sept 12.: 10:00–12:00, 13:00–15:00 and 16:00–18:00

SUN, Sept 13: 10:00–12:00, 13:00–15:00 and 16:00–18:00

Project Lead, Concept and Hardware: Shin Hanagata
| Chimeric Volunteers: Mio (Moe Yoshida), Sakaguchi (Tomoaki Sakaguchi), Yoshida (Kona Eguchi), Kumo (Yusaku Endo), Igarashi (Chihiro Igarashi), Haga (Haga Nanaha), Shikaya (Shin Hanagata) | Environment Fabrication: Takuto Ohta | Design Ethnographer: Shin Aoyama | Cinematography and Documentation: Takahiro Ueno | Curator: Tomohito Wakui

| Art Direction: Arata Nagara | Suit Fabrication: Karu Miyoshi | Enclosure Fabrication: Juri Fujii | Production Support: Keiichi Hayashi | Web Development: Shin Hanagata | Special Thanks: Izumi Enaga, Fuminu Someya | With Support from: The Project to Support Emerging Media Arts Creators, Agency for Cultural Affairs; Arts Council Tokyo; KUMA Foundation.

What the Record Forgot

Shared Histories Team (SE/ZM), SummitShare (ZM)

An interactive exhibition that stages the epistemic violence of colonial collections through absence, sound, video, AR and visitor inquiry. Three empty vitrines on massive plinths point to the over-exposure, extraction and confinement of cultural objects within colonial museum systems. Instead of presenting the objects themselves, visitors hear their sounds, experience their activation in video works and view selected digital surrogates (3D surrogates) through augmented reality. A bridge of video and infographics connects the empty vitrines with the objects' places of origin, making visible that living knowledge, communal memory and cultural practice reach far beyond colonial archives.

Building on the *SummitShare* and *Shared Histories* platforms as well as on the work of the Women's History Museum of Zambia on the concept of the "Petrified Archive," on restitution and on "epistemic repair," What the Record Forgot asks what museums need to unlearn, and how, together with the communities concerned, they can develop new ways of preserving, reactivating and passing on cultural heritage as living knowledge.

<https://www.whmzambia.org/>

<https://summitshare.co/>

<https://www.varldskulturmuseet.se/en>

Daniel Tembo, Mario M. Jere, Nhyira J. Amofa-Sekyi, Taonga D. Makashinyi, Thomas M. Gondwe, Mulenga M. Kapwepwe, Samba Yonga, Victoria Phiri, Micheal Barrett, Yasaar Biladama, Andrea Kronlund, Etnografiska Museet, Swedish National Museums of World Culture, Swedish Institute, Ethereum Foundation,

Octant, Hanan Haj Ahmed, Q, The Choma Museum and Crafts Centre, Miyanda Women's Club (Katondo Village), Tubugane Women's Club (Tick Mwiinga Village), Mwenza Women's Club (Siabaswi), Mwenza Men's Club (Siabaswi)

Mechanical Kurds

Hito Steyerl (DE)

Mechanical Kurds is a single-channel video installation that reflects on the relationships between digital (click) labor, artificial intelligence, geopolitical conflict and image production, extending cinematic storytelling into the exhibition space. The film is based on the stories of Syrian Kurdish refugees who work as click workers for crowdsourcing platforms in a camp in Erbil, Iraq. These are websites on which large numbers of people work together on a project, for as long as their labor is still needed. By labeling and categorizing images used to train artificial intelligence, they contribute indirectly to the development of technologies that are later deployed in autonomous vehicles and military drones. The project exposes a disturbing loop: those who produce computer vision, that is, the ability of machines to capture, analyze and interpret visual data such as images and video, can themselves become targets within automated military processes.

Mechanical Kurds reveals the bodies, territories and conflicts that remain invisible in the deployment of AI, and exposes the political violence concealed behind images and algorithms. Moving between documentary and fiction, the film lays bare the fragility of digital economic infrastructures built on the exploitation of human labor and energy resources.

Courtesy of the artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul

Deer Hunter

Andrew Herzog (US)

Deer Hunter is a hybrid documentary that combines archival footage, private family videos and generative AI to examine how masculinity, migration and inherited cultural narratives are passed on from one generation to the next. The work explores these themes through the artist's relationship to the men of his family: his Italian ancestors, who fled fascism for the United States in the early 20th century, his dying godfather and his newborn son. Filmed in Italy, his ancestors' place of origin, the work traces a movement between origin and destination. Migration, belonging and the "American promise" appear here as both inheritance and burden.

The film combines documentary footage with generative image sequences in which a synthetically produced deer is inserted into real landscapes. The result are scenes that appear documentary yet are constructed through machine learning. The deer appears, among other places, in Rome's EUR district, connecting questions of nature, ideology and belonging. Historical material, including a 1970s National Rifle Association film, meets the artist's own family footage, linking personal memory with national myths. *Deer Hunter* asks how notions of masculinity, violence and identity are handed down across generations, and what role new technologies play in constructing past and future.

<https://www.andrewherzog.com/>

This video work was made possible through an Affiliated Artist Fellowship at the American Academy in Rome awarded by the Savannah College of Art and

Design. Technological production support was provided by the Krea AI platform. Sound design by Tomas Ornelas. Musical composition by Spurge Carter.

A Cartography of Genocide: Israel's Conduct in Gaza Since October 2023

Forensic Architecture (GB)

Since the beginning of the Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip, which was launched in October 2023 following the Hamas terrorist attack, Forensic Architecture has been gathering data on Israeli military attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. The analysis of these events documents the near-total destruction of civilian life in Gaza. Forensic Architecture has also recorded and evaluated Israeli military evacuation orders that directed the Palestinian civilian population into areas of the Gaza Strip designated as safe. These orders repeatedly led to large-scale displacement within Gaza, frequently into regions that were later attacked despite that designation.

To make patterns such as these in the conduct of the Israeli military visible, Forensic Architecture uses an interactive web platform that brings thousands of data points together into a navigable map of the Gaza Strip. Users can select regions, time periods and event categories and filter the data to reveal connections and developments, for instance between the ground offensive and the destruction of medical infrastructure.

According to Forensic Architecture, the patterns observed point to a systematic and organized campaign aimed at the destruction of life, of the essential conditions for life and of life-sustaining infrastructure. The project comprises an interactive cartographic platform as well as an 827-page report that uses spatial analysis and pattern recognition to examine how Israel's military operations have caused far-reaching harm to the civilian population. The platform is continuously updated and expanded; the report was submitted to South Africa's legal team in support of its ongoing investigation in the genocide case against Israel before the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

<https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/a-cartography-of-genocide>

Forensic Architecture Team: Eyal Weizman, Nour Abuzaid, Omar Ferwati, Davide Piscitelli, Samaneh Moafi, Joshua Richards, Peter Polack, Júlia Nueno Guitart, Lucia Rebolino, Andra Pop-Jurj, Shourideh C. Molavi, Natalia Sliwinska, Elliot Bourne, Nour Abuzaid, Peter Polack, Júlia Nueno Guitart, Robert Trafford, Robert Mackey, Elizabeth Breiner, Ray Adams Row Farr, Amina Darwish, Isabella Parlamis, Madeleine Griffiths, Agata Nguyen Chuong, Lola Conte, Imani Jacqueline Brown, Nicholas Masterton, Jumanah Bawazir, Thomas Mattia, Martin Eichler, Angela Mehta

Supporting Organisations: Al-Haq, Airwars
Extended Team: Information Design and Consultancy: Sophie Dyer; Platform Design and Development: Rectangle; Platform Development: Nathan Wright; Legal Research: Leela Jadhav; Research Assistants: Thomas Burke, Samuel Storey, Thomas Lye, Sofia Rudi Kent, Joel Schölin, Pinelopi Gardika, Daniel Day, Antonio Voce; Graphic Design & Layout: Giorgia Chiarion
Special Thanks: Firas Hawasly, Harj Narulla, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor

Office for Tree Migration (OTM)

Agnes Meyer-Brandis (DE)

The *Office for Tree Migration (OTM)* is a long-term, interdisciplinary art and research project. It investigates the migration of trees and plants across different climate zones and along tree lines: how they move northward, climb uphill in California's White Mountains or advance into peat bogs. Because climate change is progressing faster than trees can adapt by natural means, the OTM explores new methods intended to enable trees to migrate more quickly and so escape climate change.

The *Office for Tree Migration* brings together the general public, artists and scientists from a wide range of fields, from ecology and meteorology to geoinformatics and biotechnology. At the same time, it functions as a research platform and as a sensory environment for ecological understanding. By combining ecological monitoring, phenological cameras and custom-built software and hardware tools, the project engages with slow, invisible changes and transforms environmental data into immersive installations, situations and workshops that open up new perspectives for viewers. The OTM's methods do not set out to deliver answers, but to raise questions.

Thank you to all wonderful supporters and OTM Agents!

Curator and producer: Ulla Taipale; Scientists: Eeva-Stiina Tuittila (UEF), Timo Vesala (INAR), Aino Korrensalo (LUKE), Alex de Vries University Groningen, NL; Wandering Tree Technology: Toivo Pohja, Heikki Laakso; IT support: Kari Pouttu, Jonne Pitkänen;

Software development: Christian Dietz; Camera system: Heikki Laakso; Data management: Zuzanna Kuglaz, Simon Lupfer; OTM Hyytiälä technical setup: Fabian Heller; Sound composition: Michael Moser; Vocals: Elsi Sloan; Co-Editing: Marie-Kathrine Theiler; Sound Design: Jochen Jezussek

Dietmar Prammer

Mayor of the City of Linz and Owner Representative of Ars Electronica

"When Ars Electronica puts the negotiation of what it means to be human on its agenda this year, that is not an abstract motto but a task that concerns us all. You can see this for yourself at the Lentos Kunstmuseum: the works shown here are about how we perceive our world and the supposed certainties that come with it, about how our role models and values are shaped by the media and handed down across generations, and about the price that people and nature pay for a techno-capitalist progress that turns everything into a race. Whether at the Prix Ars Electronica or the European Commission's STARTS Prize, every work presented here is an award winner."

Doris Lang-Mayerhofer

City Councilor and Chairwoman of the Ars Electronica Advisory Board

"The Prix Ars Electronica is one of the most significant media art prizes in the world, and the exhibition at the Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz shows impressively why. The projects presented here engage critically with the great questions of our time while opening up new perspectives for the further development of our society. That these works find their way to Linz is thanks to an international network that has grown over decades. It is precisely from this that the appeal arises for which Linz, as a UNESCO City of Media Arts, is known far beyond Austria."

Hemma Schmutz

Artistic Director Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz

"The works honored by international expert juries at the Prix Ars Electronica and the S+T+ARTS Prize take up central questions of our present. They engage with power and responsibility, with social change and with how we live together. Art can make things visible, question them critically and also ask uncomfortable questions. That is precisely where its strength lies: in opening up different perspectives and encouraging dialogue. The Lentos offers space to these international artistic positions and hosts the Prix Ars Electronica & S+T+ARTS Prize 2026 exhibition."

Gerfried Stocker

Artistic Director Ars Electronica

"The Lentos Kunstmuseum is showing one of the most important exhibitions of this year's Ars Electronica. Six award-winning works from the Prix Ars Electronica and the STARTS Prize are presented here, illuminating central aspects of being human: our perception of the world, techno-capitalist progress, current geopolitical crises and climate change. The works shake supposed certainties, expose contradictions and invite us to renegotiate what it means to be human."