ELEKTRA

BIENNALE ART
NUMÉRIQUE
DIGITAL ART
BIENNIAL

ORGANIZATION'S MANDATE AND NATURE OF ACTIVITIES

ELEKTRA is a contemporary art organization based in Montreal (Quebec, Canada) that provides exposure for artists from all over the world and presents works that combine art and new technology to reflect a contemporary aesthetic of research and experimentation. Through events and activities, our organization offers ideal contexts for disseminating the work of artists, locally, nationally and internationally, as well as works by those who want to explore avenues of their practice. ELEKTRA provides exposure for hybrid, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary projects that add a technological dimension to contemporary art.

Our main activities are:
- The ELEKTRA Festival which, since 1999, has been helping audiences explore the diversity of performance practices.
- The International Digital Art Biennial (BIAN), a major exhibition since 2012. Through this event, ELEKTRA also joins forces with other players in the field of art (Montreal Contemporary Art Museum, Montreal Fine Art Museum, Arsenal Contemporary Art, etc.), presenting pieces all around the city. Through its reach and unifying nature, it promotes the city's untapped cultural potential, giving it unique status in North America.
- The International Marketplace for Digital Art (IMDA), a meeting of professionals and artists open to the public and part of the festival every year since 2006.

For Montreal audiences, **ELEKTRA is a showcase for local, national and international creations.** On the international scene, ELEKTRA is an ambassador and exporter of Quebec talent and is instrumental in initiatives like *Digital Quebec*. ELEKTRA presented a series of showcases in Paris in 2011, Brussels in 2013, London and Rome in 2015, and since 2002 has promoted the presence of Québec artists in South Korea, Japan, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany and other countries.

ELEKTRA is a unifying force. We develop unique collaborative relationships with partners by ensuring we stay on theme and respect partners' missions and programming interests. Internationally, ELEKTRA is involved in an increasing number of joint presentation projects with foreign organizations (among them, with Biennale Némo, Gaîtée lyrique, CentQuatre in Paris since 2009, INDAF in Incheon in 2010, the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles for the event at Bozar in 2013, the Mapping Festival in Geneva in 2016, ZKM in Karlsruhe in 2018, etc.).

ELEKTRA is also cross-disciplinary. We break down barriers between artistic communities and blends arts disciplines, such as music, video, the visual arts, cinema, performance arts, design, gaming, net art, sound and interactive installations, working with the most recent technologies.

ELEKTRA supports emerging artists and art forms. The festival and the BIAN ensure that emerging and established artists from all practice areas interact with researchers, programmers, engineers and technicians who have a shared interest in artistic applications of new technologies. We are a unifying force in our community to generate greater recognition of the works and artists in our discipline.

www.elektramontreal.ca

OBJECTIVES

ELEKTRA's promotional objectives have grown out of its intentions:

- The recognition of the discipline, through ELEKTRA's excellent international, national and local reputation.
- Montreal's international reputation as the North American capital for art and new technologies.
- The development of a new style and new forms of mediation, partly based on maximizing the efficiency and user friendliness of web and digital tools.
- The education, diversification and growth of the audience.
- Sharing knowledge related to the arts and new technology.
- Encouraging female artists to present their work.
- Bringing artists using new technologies into the contemporary art scene.
- Increasing the number of partnerships in all sectors.

The means used to achieve these objectives:

- Offer high-quality, diversified **arts programming**.
- Offer the public **the right conditions** for the presentation of works, to create the best experience possible.
- Maintain and diversify **our one-time national and international activities** year-round, to maintain a presence with local audiences and the international community.
- Promote **audience crossover** through our many partnerships.
- Offer audiences a **wide range of free satellite activities**, not only presentation activities, but also introductions to the discipline through workshops and conferences.
- **Expand our** national and international **artistic network** to promote better representation of genres and cultural communities.
- Maintain and diversify **periodic national and international activities** year-round, to sustain a presence with the local public and the international community.

HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION

Founded in 1978, the Association pour la Création et la Recherche Électroacoustiques du Québec (ACREQ) took a major turn in 1999 by grouping all of its presentations, previously offered throughout the year, into a major event called ELEKTRA. The event was designed to respond to the need of artists who wanted to combine sound and visuals by exploring creative media such as video, computer animation, non-narrative film and robotics. Seeking to break down barriers between aesthetics, ELEKTRA enabled the development of a new practice, in which sound and visuals make up an integral whole, and offered creators new avenues for presentation and collaboration.

From electroacoustic music (before the creation of festival) to electronic and, later, digital arts, the ACREQ evolved and continued to position itself at the forefront of artistic movements that leverage the development of technology tools.

Our international presence grew in 2006 with the presentation of four local artists as part of the first Québec Numériq at the Théâtre du Châtelet in 2006, then in 2008 by our handling "after" events for Les Étés de la Danse at the Grand Palais in Paris. Also in 2008, we received carte blanche from the Maison des Métallos in the 11th arrondissement of Paris. We took the International Marketplace for Digital Art abroad: Brussels in 2009 and 2013; Istanbul in 2010; Paris in 2011; London, Rome and New York in

2015. In 2010, we were invited to present five Quebec artists at the INDAF in Seoul, South Korea. Then, in 2011, we co-produced the Spécial Québec Numérique for the Némo festival, with activities (exhibitions, performances, the IMDA, panels) at the CentQuatre and at the Gaîté Lyrique in Paris, marking the 50th anniversary of the Québec Government Office in Paris. We have since co-produced Québec Numérique in Brussels in 2013 (with the Bozar Electronic Art Festival); in London (with the British Film Institute); and in Rome (with the Romaeuropa Festival) in 2015. Also in 2015, we co-produced an evening of audiovisual performances with the Conseil Québécois des Arts Médiatiques (CQAM) as part of the Québec Digital Art @ New York event, organized by the CQAM. In 2016 we presented three Quebec works as part of the Visions of the Future II, a co-production with New York's Hyphen Hub.

This is in addition to the many presentations of Québec artists we have supported around the world at festivals in Rio de Janeiro (BR), Nagoya (JP), Rome, Milan and Bolzano (IT), Berlin (DE), The Hague and Eindhoven (NL) and Nantes, Rennes, Lyon, Lille, Enghien-les-bains (FR).

Other noteworthy facts:
In 2009, we marked ELEKTRA's tenth anniversary with the publication of a thought piece: *Angles Digital Arts*. The year 2009 also marked an increase in the number of digital installations around Montréal, in cooperation with galleries and artist-run centres, which laid the groundwork for the BIAN. In 2010, we won the Grand Prix du Conseil des Arts de Montréal and were a finalist for the award in 2013, for the production of the 2012 BIAN. In the wake of the success of these first two editions, in June 2016 the third edition of the BIAN was presented at Arsenal Contemporary Art, with an ambitious program of exhibitions using the theme of AUTOMATA - *Art Made by Machines for Machines*.

History – Highlights and Major Changes from Recent Years

- Creation of an annual event called ELEKTRA in **1999** at Usine C.
- Presentation partnership in **2005** with the Place des Arts and the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal.
- Beginning in **2005**, the ACREQ starts presenting installation pieces.
- Presentation of six Canadian pieces at the Québec Numériq evening at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris in September **2006**.
- In May **2007**, first edition of the International Marketplace for Digital Art.
- New partnerships in **2007** with the Hexagram research institute (Concordia, UQAM) and the Cinémathèque Québécoise.
- In October **2008**, presentation of the first edition of ELEKTRA_LAB: Interactivity and New Interfaces.
- Launch of a publication, *Angles Digital Arts*, in May **2009**, featuring three essays on the digital arts and marking ELEKTRA's tenth anniversary.
- First edition of the International Digital Art Biennial, from April 18 to June 13, **2012**, with an opening at the Montreal Museum for Fine Arts and a 3D video by Robert Lepage (France guest country).
- Second edition in **2014** of the International Digital Art Biennial – PHYSICAL/ITY from May 1 to June 19, **2015**, with an exhibition at the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal (Belgium, guest country).
- First edition of the International Sound Art Biennial (BIAS) in May and June **2015**.
- Third edition of the International Digital Art Biennial - AUTOMATA June 3 to July 3, **2016**, with a major exhibition at Arsenal Contemporary Art (Switzerland, guest country).
- Fifth edition of the International Digital Art Biennial – Sing The Electric Body June 29 to August 5, **2018**, with a major exhibition at Arsenal Contemporary Art (Germany, guest country; Peter Weibel from ZKM as guest curator).

- Sixth edition of the International Digital Art Biennial – Spring **2020**, with a major exhibition at Arsenal Contemporary Art (South Korea, guest country).

Awards and Recognition

January 2013 > Finalist in the digital arts category of the 28th Grand Prix du Conseil des Arts de Montréal, for the first edition of the BIAN in 2012.

March 2010 > Winner of the 25th Grand Prix du Conseil des Arts de Montréal, digital arts category, for the 10th edition of ELEKTRA.

January 2002 > Finalist in the media arts section of the **2002** Grand Prix du Conseil des Arts de Montréal.