

## NEW MEDIA ART

# Festivals and Centres in Germany

by DON RITTER

Germany has been active in the field of new media art since the 1980s. Many German artists, curators, and theoreticians specialize in this genre, and the country hosts numerous art centres and festivals that involve new media. This article will discuss some of these German institutions, and it will also describe the opportunities they provide to Canadian artists.

*Hartware MedienKunstVerein*  
Dortmund | <http://hmkv.de>

Hartware was founded in 1996 by curators Iris Dressler and Hans D. Christ. The centre describes itself as an “open platform for the production, presentation, and discourse of contemporary art, and especially media art.” The majority of its activities are group exhibitions by international new media artists, though it also organizes lectures, film and video screenings, workshops, and conferences.

### HMKV'S PHOENIX HALL



PHOTO BY THOMAS WUCHERPFENNIG

### INSIDE PHOENIX HALL



PHOTO BY JANNIS LEIDEL

Hartware does not have a residency program or a call for proposals. Exhibitions are curated by Inke Arns who directs Hartware along with Susanne Ackers. Dortmund is located in Northwest Germany, also near the border of Netherlands.

*EMAF (European Media Art Festival)*  
Osnabrück | <http://emaf.de>

emaf began as the Experimental Film Workshop, an annual event for filmmakers that was created in 1981 by four university students. The workshop expanded in 1988 to include video and installations, and it was then renamed the European Media Art Festival. The primary activity of EMAF is its annual festival but it also manages its archives and produces CD-ROMs and television programs. EMAF is concerned with cultural and artistic developments of the moving image using current and new media.

## EMAF LOCATION



PHOTO BY MIRKO HUMBERT

The festival presents a large exhibition of photos, kinetic works, installations, performances, films, and videos as well as hosting lectures by artists, academics, and media theorists. Artworks within the festival are selected by the EMAF curators or through an open call for participation; selected works usually relate to a specific theme that changes annually. The best work of the festival is given the EMAF award; in 2007, that was 4000 euros. Artists whose works are exhibited might receive an exhibition fee and travel costs. The current directors of EMAF are Hermann Noering, Alfred Rotert, and Ralf Sausmikat. Osnabrück is located in northwest Germany near the Netherlands border.

## EMAF EXHIBIT: LOWTUNING



PHOTO BY LUKA PRINČIČ

## Tesla

Berlin | <http://tesla-berlin.de>

Tesla is a relatively young organization located in the Podewil building in Berlin-Mitte. The Podewil had been active for over ten years as a centre for art, music

and performance, but it was administratively restructured in 2005. Tesla does not focus exclusively on new media art; it is interested in any art forms that are hybrids of genres, media, or content. Activities at Tesla include video screenings, exhibitions, workshops, artist lectures, artist residencies, and open studios.

## TESLA



PHOTO BY ARAM BARTHOLL

Artist residencies are the primary activity of Tesla. An “open studio” is a residency that can be visited by the public. Although Tesla has limited resources and funding for its residencies, it provides a rich intellectual environment where participants receive feedback from other artists, the curators of Tesla, and the public.

The current directors of Tesla are Detlev Schneider, Carsten Seiffarth, and Andreas Broeckmann. Until this spring, Broeckmann had been the director of the Transmediale Festival, whose office is also within the Podewil. Proposals for residencies, exhibitions, or video screenings can be submitted by email to [info@tesla-berlin.de](mailto:info@tesla-berlin.de)

## TESLA EXHIBIT: THE MESSENGER



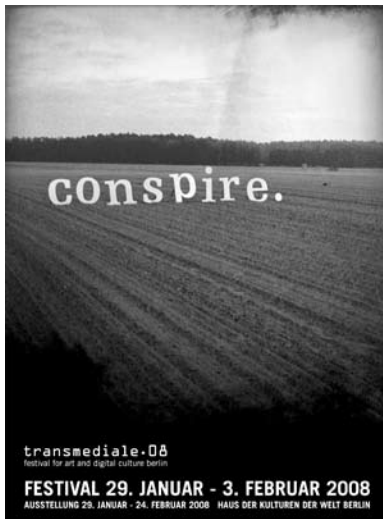
PHOTO BY SASCHA POHFLEPP

## *Transmediale*

Berlin | <http://transmediale.de>

Transmediale evolved from Videofest, a Berlin video festival that was created in 1988 by artist Micky Kwella. The festival was initially concerned with screen-based works that addressed political issues. The festival refocused onto new media technologies in 1997, but retained its political perspective.

### TRANSMEDIALE POSTER



The festival currently has three components: the Transmediale Award, the conference, and the exhibition. The festival describes itself as presenting “advanced artistic positions reflecting on the socio-cultural impact of new technologies.” The festival is concerned with a particular theme each year. The theme for 2008 is “conspiracy”.

Anyone is free to apply for the Transmediale Award. The winning new media work (which received 4000 euros in 2007) is selected by an international jury according to various criteria, and its relevance to the festival theme. The

### TRANSMEDIALE EXHIBIT: TAKEN

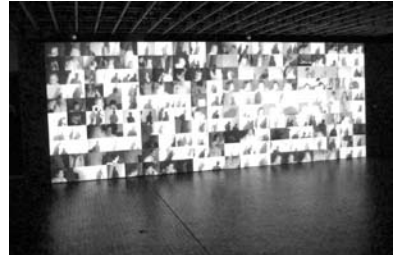


PHOTO BY TIM KAISER

Transmediale exhibition for 2008 will present works that have been selected by its curators and also through an open call for participation. The conference is quite academic and it presents prominent international speakers from the fields of philosophy, new media theory, new media art, and mathematics. Speakers for Transmediale 2007 included Canadian political scientist Arthur Kroker. 2008 will be the first year that an open call will be used to select some of the conference speakers.

Transmediale is probably the largest new media festival in Germany, and it attracts a wide collection of international attendees, speakers, and artists. It recently appointed Stephen Kovats as its new artistic director, a Canadian who has been living in Germany since the early 1990s.

### TRANSMEDIALE



PHOTO BY PABLO SANZ ALMOGUERA

*Edith Russ Haus für Medienkunst*  
(The Edith Russ Site for Media Art)  
Oldenburg | <http://edith-russ-haus.de>

The Edith Russ Haus für Medienkunst is a privately funded organization that promotes the “transition of art into the twentieth century.” Activities at the Edith Russ Haus include exhibitions, lectures, workshops, performances, and an international residency program for artists. Since 2000,

**EDITH RUSS HAUS**



PHOTO BY RÉGINE DEBATTY

the Edith Russ Haus has hosted international artist residencies and exhibitions involving video art, sound art, Internet art, installations, and more. All activities at the Edith Russ Haus involve new media.

The centre offers three residencies every year, and each artist receives a stipend of 10,000 euro. Acceptance of a residency requires that an artist be in Oldenburg for one month, accommodation provided. The current director of the Edith Russ Haus is Sabine Himmelsbach, previously a curator at the ZKM in Karlsruhe. Oldenburg is located in Northern Germany, near Bremen.

*Werkleitz Gesellschaft*  
Halle | <http://werkleitz.de>

Werkleitz Gesellschaft was created in 1993 as an association to provide artists with resources for producing film and media based works. The center is concerned with the production and exhibition of moving images—including new media—but it is primarily interested in supporting works that involve political and social issues. The goal of Werkleitz is to assist artists in the production, funding, and distribution of their artworks.

Activities at Werkleitz include artist residencies, artist grants, public lectures, and the Werkleitz Biennale, an international exhibition of media art. Many of its residency programs are conducted in collaboration with institutions from other European countries, including Netherlands and Bulgaria. The different residencies and grants offered by Werkleitz provide artists with varying amounts of resources and stipends, and travel costs for certain residencies. Application forms and additional information about their residencies and grants are available on the Werkleitz website.

The current director is Karsten Stempel and chair of the board is Peter Zorn, one of the founders of Werkleitz Gesellschaft. Halle is located in eastern Germany, near Leipzig.

*ZKM (Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie)*  
(Center for Art and Media)  
Karlsruhe | <http://zkm.de>

The ZKM is the largest institution of its kind in Germany, and probably in the world. Housed within a renovated munitions factory, the massive building contains two museums, a municipal art gallery, various exhibition and performance spaces, lecture halls, research facilities, a library, offices, studios, and a design acad-

## ZKM BUILDING



PHOTO BY STEPHAN MOSEL

emy (Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe). The ZKM was founded in 1989 and it officially opened at its current location in 1997 under director and founder Heinrich Klotz. The goal of this well-funded institution is to “bring together art and new media in theory and practice.”

The activities of the ZKM include the acquisition of a permanent art collection, regular thematic art exhibitions, hosting of artist residencies, public lectures and symposia, and the publishing of exhibition catalogues and theoretical–historical texts. The majority of these activities involve new media art or contemporary art, though they may also involve political and

## ZKM ATRIUM EXHIBIT: SPACE INVADERS



PHOTO BY KLAUS NAHR

economic issues. Artworks within its exhibitions and permanent collection are selected by the ZKM’s curatorial staff or by guest curators. The activities of the ZKM are intended for artists, academics, students, intellectuals, and the general public.

Since its inception, the ZKM has provided hundreds of residencies to international artists, including many Canadians. These residencies usually involve the production of new media artworks. The specific resources provided by the ZKM for a residency will vary, but they may include equipment, studio and office space, technical assistance, stipends, and accommodation. Artists who are offered residencies at the ZKM usually have a fair amount of experience with art and technology. The ZKM is organized into many different departments; artist residencies are coordinated by the Institute for New Media or by the Institute for Music and Acoustics.

Since 1999, the ZKM has been directed by artist and theorist Peter Weibel. Karlsruhe is located in Southwest Germany, near the border with France.

It is perhaps befitting that Germany is extremely active in the production and presentation of new media art because of its high regard for technology and culture in general. Relative to other countries, one of the most unique aspects of Germany is that art and intellectualism are of interest to a large portion of its population, even to people outside of academia or the art world. In addition to the various opportunities available from the institutions described in this article, artists who visit Germany are exposed to society with a high level of respect and interest in art of any type—including new media art.

Don Ritter is a Canadian artist and writer living in Berlin.

<http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com>