

Cultural Association VEIK - Portfolio

The cultural association VEIK (Kulturverein VEIK) has been active not only in Austria but internationally since its founding in December 2012. VEIK stands for “Verein für experimentelle und interdisziplinäre Kunst” (Association for Experimental and Interdisciplinary Art). The purpose of the association is to promote art and culture, creativity, mindfulness, connection with nature, and intercultural exchange. A central part of our work is the annual light art festival Blockheide Leuchtet, which has taken place since 2018 and represents a unique cultural highlight in Austria, set in the heart of a nature park.

Below are insights into some of the association’s projects.

BLOCKHEIDE LEUCHTET **Light, Art and Nature**

The established international light art festival Blockheide Leuchtet takes place in a natural environment across several hectares in the Naturpark Blockheide, creating spaces for contemplation and engagement with contemporary art. The project began as part of the Viertelfestival in 2018, already attracting around 3,000 visitors. Due to its high artistic and cultural quality, as well as its unique character within Austria, the decision was made to continue developing the festival. It has since been supported by the Municipality of Gmünd, the Province of Lower Austria, the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport (BMWKMS), the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA), the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), as well as numerous partners, sponsors, institutions and volunteers.

Blockheide Leuchtet represents a unique concept that has not previously been realised in this form in Austria. The festival unfolds in an exceptional setting: among granite rock formations and vegetation, across a large natural area, visitors of all ages experience light installations that create magical spaces of wonder and contemplation.

Blockheide Leuchtet is a member of the International Light Festival Organisation. Leonardo Bettinelli, director and curator of the festival, is also a board member of this international network.





LICHTSPEKTAKEL SPARBACH

Light and sound in symbiosis with nature.

Austria's oldest nature park was transformed into a magical, illuminated forest. With sunset, the transformation begins: light installations and projections stage a pathway through the landscape, turning it into a unique open-air museum through the art of light. Along the route, visitors encounter dancing and juggling luminous figures, as well as special concerts and sound journeys to discover and enjoy. At the campfire, guests can take a rest and listen to a storyteller, or share their own stories under the open sky while enjoying regional culinary specialties. All these experiences transform the natural space into an extraordinary environment of discovery for visitors of all ages — a true delight for all the senses.



ROTTAL - ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

The Rottal Artistic and Scientific Research Center is an international artist-in-residence project located in the northernmost part of Austria. It is being developed through the careful revitalisation of historic customs houses that once served as housing for border officials and were acquired in 2020 by Leonardo Bettinelli and Nina Fountedakis. The aim is to preserve the architectural heritage while creating a space dedicated to artistic and scientific research.

The residency focuses on themes such as nature, biodiversity, nature conservation, nocturnal ecosystems, and the responsible use of light in sensitive natural environments. The buildings have served for decades as a habitat for bats and are therefore under nature protection, which strongly shapes the ecological focus of the project.

The centre promotes international exchange between artists, researchers and local communities, building on the network of the Blockheide Leuchtet festival. Workshops, lectures and collaborations make the research accessible to the public and contribute to the cultural development of the rural border region.



Beginning of the revitalization of the building in 2020

ARTS EDUCATION and CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT with CHILDREN and YOUNG PEOPLE

Since 2014 we have been working with children and young people, with a particular focus on special schools, in order to encourage creativity and constructive collaboration. To implement these projects, we work with a wide range of institutions and partners, including wienXtra schulevents, Game City Vienna, the Kinderkulturzentrum Kuddelmuddel in Linz, ARGE Kinderkulturwoche Salzburg, the Frida & Fred Children's Museum in Graz, the Ars Electronica Center and Festival, and many others. Projects in and with special schools, and therefore with children with severe disabilities, hold a particularly important place in our work. Since 2015 we have implemented one to two larger projects each year in special schools as part of the cultural initiative "culture connected" by OeAD and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

Our conceptual approach is inspired by holistic art therapy: creativity is understood as an innate human ability that can be stimulated and expanded through early encouragement and supportive environments. We consider this extremely important—not only for the individual child or person, but also for humanity as a whole and, ultimately, for the world. With our work we aim to contribute, in our own way, to this broader goal.

Example: Project "LICHTSPIELE" at ASO Gmünd, 25 - 29 March 2019

The project LICHTSPIELE focused on a creative, caring and playful exploration of light and its possibilities, as well as on observing its effects on children with severe disabilities in an open and non-judgmental way. Together with the participants, a luminous world of sensory experiences was created, allowing the children to engage with light through play, perception and creative interaction.



Presentation of the resulting "light portraits" and the shared outcomes created during the week.

Example: Project “Pictures at an Exhibition” with BORG Scheibbs

A multimedia concert event as part of the Lower Austrian State Exhibition 2015. The visual show was developed together with the students over several months.

Example: Project “LICHTWELTEN” at ASO Waidhofen an der Thaya, 23 - 27 April 2018

Painting, creating, experimenting and making music with light—using our unconventional, self-built light instruments, which were awarded second prize at the Margaret Guthman Musical Instrument Competition at the Georgia Institute of Technology (USA).



NIÑOS CONSENTIDOS FESTIVAL

The beginning of the association in Austria

Niños Consentidos (Pampered Children / Children with Senses) was an experimental and interdisciplinary arts festival founded in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2006. Over the following years, the festival evolved through various formats and contexts, continuously exploring new approaches to artistic creation, collaboration, and exchange. In 2010, it expanded to Europe, where it was presented fourteen times in Barcelona, while satellite editions also took place in Lisbon and Berlin.

Beginning in 2014, five editions of the festival were held in Vienna as the first major project of Kulturverein VEIK, with the support of several public institutions, including the City of Vienna, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Arts and Culture, and numerous other partners.

The festival provided an open platform for artists from all disciplines to present works, develop new ideas, and engage in creative exchange. Conceived as a space for artistic research and experimentation, it served as a meeting point for projects and actions that brought together diverse artistic languages and practices. Its aim was to foster meaningful encounters, collaborations, and networks, both among participating artists and between artists and audiences.

At its core, Niños Consentidos sought to encourage experimentation, cooperation, and the creation of lasting artistic networks. The festival promoted dialogue, critical reflection, and the exchange of ideas, creating opportunities to raise questions, explore new perspectives, and celebrate the transformative potential of contemporary artistic practice.





PARTICIPATION in FESTIVALS and INICIATIVES

Through the cultural association, we have collaborated with numerous festivals and initiatives. Our work spans a wide range of formats—from art and music festivals to circus and street arts, as well as technology and science festivals. With our light-based, innovative and contemporary artistic approach, which creates immersive audiovisual experiences, we address a distinctive aspect of contemporary culture while also contributing to a unique niche within the international festival landscape. As a result, the list of festivals we have collaborated with worldwide has grown steadily, and the number of countries where we have been able to share our work and contribute to the cultural landscape with our Austrian participation is extensive (including AR, BR, DE, DK, EG, FI, GB, HR, HU, IT, MK, PT, RO, RS, SI, US).

PARTNER INSTITUTIONS (Selection)

WienXtra / Albertina Museum / Ars Electronica Center und Festival / ÖKF und ÖB weltweit / BM für Bildung und Frauen / BM für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung / BMWKMS Kunst und Kultur / MA7 Kulturabteilung / Skica / Finland Institute / Polnisches Institut Wien / Pro Helvetia / Schwedische Botschaft Wien / Ballonie Bruxelles International / AIE / Arbeiterkammer Niederösterreich / SKE / OeAD / Otto Mauer Fonds / Naturpark Blockheide / Waldviertel Tourismus / Ö1 Club / HAKUK / Gmünd Hilft / Pfadfindergruppe Gmünd / Stadtgemeinde Schrems / Radland / IG Kultur Österreich / Kulturvernetzung Nö / Klimaschonend Kultur veranstalten / MICA Austria / International Light Festival Organisation

AWARDS

- Lower Austria Culture Award, Category: Folk Culture – 2023
- MAECENAS Lower Austria Special Prize “Art & Culture” – 2021
- MAECENAS Lower Austria Special Prize “Art & Culture” – 2019