

# m:conVISIONS

**KNOWLEDGE ART AS A COMMUNICATION MEDIUM** Why we need museums where visitors join in. An interview with Peter Weibel about the democratization of art.

**MARKETPLACE** Art also requires courage: the world premiere of “autosymphonic”. “Art Walking Tour” through the Congress Center: The importance of architecture and art for venues where events are held. The art of healing: Exhibitions on medical congresses.





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## Knowledge, skill and desire.



**Michel Maugé**

Managing Director m:con  
Mannheim  
and Honorary Consul  
of the Republic of France

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear readers,

A person who does not know anything has nothing to forget. However, anyone who thinks about the knowledge gained over the years will be surprised that old values still endure. Or they change – for instance, if new pioneering achievements suddenly become old hat or the strength of new ideas and networks creates connections.

The connections between philosophy and psychology, body language and factual knowledge are complex and complicated. Technology helps to master these. The new humanities and natural sciences make them easier to understand. But when it comes to how brain research becomes a type of revolution – or how our understanding is influenced by fine arts – we know that we know nothing. And that is so very true.

The decision to base “m:convisions” on specific topics has been very well received. Regular positive feedback has encouraged us to keep to this “knowledge series”. Containing information and full of news, new ideas and reports, “m:convisions” is increasingly becoming a magazine that demonstrates depth and independence. This time the subject is topical and with an eye to the future – art as a means of communication.

Now the exciting and fascinating year of 2011 is drawing to a close. A highlight for m:con and Mannheim was definitely the premiere of the “autosymphonic”, an extraordinary event which made its mark far beyond the city itself. The impressive aerial photographs in our review from page 43 onwards documented the breathtaking staging with light, lasers and pictures.

I hope that you will have an enjoyable advent and run-up to the festive season, as well as an exciting excursion through the topics in this edition.

Yours

Michel Maugé

Impressum:

PUBLISHED BY  
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## At the crossroads: Peter Weibel predicts a new age Art as a communication medium

It has always been difficult to define art. Today, in view of rapid social and technical change, it seems even more complicated. Professor Peter Weibel, Chairman of the Center for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, is not only an artist himself but he has also made a name for himself as an art and media theoretician. m:convisions asked Weibel about the role of art in today's society.

**m:convisions: What do you understand by art?** Marshall McLuhan said: "Art is anything you can get away with." The definition of art has changed greatly over the course of the millennia. Liberal arts are one example – "artes liberales". The ancient Greeks interpreted these as activities for free men. However, they did not mean art in the way we understand it today. They were referring to mathematics, philosophy, geometry and astronomy. Painting or music was classed as a craft – and that was the work of slaves. Painting, for instance, had to fight to be recognized as art. When Leonardo Da Vinci elevated painting to an academic level, he achieved that art became a free activity and was no longer associated with slaves.

**In ancient times art was clearly defined. What about today?** Until the mid-19th century it was agreed that the best Mimesis was also the best art – in other words, the most perfect imitation of reality. Under the pressure of the Enlightenment, artists had to demonstrate what methods they used to obtain a certain result – just as scientists did. That was the beginning of abstract painting. There were paintings which did not show an object from real life but simply entailed an area painted in a monochrome color. That was the pure demonstration of the methods. Some people asked themselves: "But I can do that, too. Is that art?" From this point onwards, it was no longer clear what art is. The next break with

the past came in 1915 with Marcel Duchamps. After this, objects were classed as art. The most famous example is the bathtub by Joseph Beuys, which was scrubbed by a cleaning lady.

**Modern art no longer attempts to depict reality. Doesn't that leave art open to attack?** Absolutely. This trend started with impressionists such as Henri Matisse and Claude Monet. Anyone could see that the objects in their pictures had been painted. The impressionists rebelled against those academic painters who clung to the principle of Mimesis. Modern art is imperfect. At the same time, it is the model for the capitalist market. Each new product displaces the old one. Capitalism always involves innovation – "creative destruction". Modern artists are businesses. However, the modern age will soon come to an end. It can be seen from Neo Rauch's success that people want to get back to reality in art.

**Do you think that we are about to enter a new age in art?** That's my view one hundred percent. This is one of the effects of globalization. For people outside Europe – in Asia, for example – it is unacceptable that a monochrome painting is considered to be art.

**What will art look like in the new age?** Media such as film or television will form the starting point. Television starts with a crackling sound – here, abstraction is the beginning and not the end. These media show images of fictitious or real worlds. They were the first captives of photography. Photography aims to portray real or fictitious worlds. Artists such as Neo Rauch and Andy Warhol absorbed this development: they have restored reality.

**So, does that mean "back to the roots?"** No, not in the form of Mimesis. Art must set the stage for reality so that it provides some insights. However, there are hardly any artists who are able to do this. We do not need any art academies which teach the trade as it was in the 19th century. Artists need scientific knowledge as only this will allow them to get under the skin of reality.

**What implications do technical changes have for the art system?** With the advent of photography painters no longer hold the monopoly on reproducing images. However, photographers



**Professor Peter Weibel**, born in 1944, studied literature, film, mathematics, medicine and philosophy in Vienna and Paris. From 1976 he taught at several universities, including the University of

Applied Art Vienna. Since 1999 he has been Chairman of the Center for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe.

[www.zkm.de](http://www.zkm.de)

The blue media cube is typical of the ZKM's unusual architecture. It envelops the hermetically sealed body of the music studio with a light which shines right into the town.



produce images – not art! In 1926, the photographer Man Ray said: “Photography is not art.” In 1970 Beuys commented: “Everyone is an artist.” As a result of technical media artists have lost their monopoly on creativity. This means the abandonment of art itself and, for this reason, the “creative industry” is like a red rag to artists. The system of art in music, for instance, is threatened as a result of this. Art was a kind of business, similar to television, and the artist was the transmitter. However, art did not have a means of bulk selling because, if a work of art is going to cost a million dollars, it must not be something that is mass produced. Nowadays, anyone who produces something technically can sell his or her work on the Internet. Consequently, the mass media have lost their monopoly on distribution. Art per se has become communication as a result of this personalization of distribution technology. If Marina Abramovic sits on a chair in the Museum of Modern Art today, it only becomes art if someone sits opposite her. Alone she is only half of the work of art. The artist no longer expresses something: he offers communication.

**Does that mean that a work of art is only produced as a result of the recipient?** Just that. That is the crucial paradigm shift.

**What are your feelings when art cooperates directly with business?** Art itself is a sector of the economy. As a business sector, culture accounts for more sales in Germany than the steel industry. In spite of this, art should not become a slave to commerce. When Olafur Eliasson installs artificial waterfalls in New York, he deliberately creates a tourist attraction. Artists use art as a pretext for commercial purposes. I reject this because, as a result, art loses its autonomy. It must be left to the modern way of doing things: this has given art its autonomy in terms of form and materially, politically and socially. Artists must not give up their freedom. If they do, there is a risk that art will make the retrograde step of creating art to respond to commissions.

**What route should art take to keep its independence?** Communications are attacked by the system of art itself. The system wishes to maintain the elite character of art as the work of an

individual person. Here the masses are only allowed to play the role of the passive observer. They are supposed to make the pilgrimage to a museum, look at the Mona Lisa and pay for the privilege. However, if art wishes to remain the ideal for freedom, autonomy and democracy, it must increasingly become a means of communication. If I, as an artist, have gained an insight, I should also make it possible for others to share this insight. I need art as communication and the struggle between platforms because none of us can claim that he or she possesses absolute wisdom. I can only gain a picture of a topic if I use many sources of information.

**Earlier you said that participation is very important. How do you implement this element in your exhibitions?** Most works of art in an exhibition only function if the observer does something – by pressing a button or moving a hand. It is only then that the work comes to life. We also work with QR codes which allow visitors to access further information. It is crucial that the viewer can take something home outside exhibition opening hours. I call that a perforated museum.

**Do some people object to these kinds of exhibitions?** Yes. But the objection doesn't come from the visitors, it comes from the arts sections of magazines. Arts sections express the criticism that our institute is like a games library or an interactive museum. I am proud that we are an interactive museum! Interaction is the essence of democracy. However, the arts editors defend their monopoly. They associate change with hostility. That is not something we see from the members of the public who visit us. They are much less prejudiced than the experts.

**Participation is an element of art that has not yet been recognized on the arts scene ...** That's right and it is absurd. We would be pleased if our society was a society where people joined in. To a certain degree, I fill in the gaps when it comes to art. Anyone can hold an exhibition of major artists such as Van Gogh or Chagall. However, encouraging people to join in is the real art. ■

# Architecture and art as a factor in the success of marketing real estate as a venue for events

## “Art Walking Tour” through the Congress Center

By Professor Louise Bielzer, Head of the BA Program in Media and Communication Management, Karlsruhochschule International University, Karlsruhe

The competition to host events and gain customers is also becoming increasingly tough for the venues where the events are held. Exhibition, congress and sports centers and other venues that host events do not only have to cope with the general economic climate and increasing demands made by event organizers. Many venues which were not originally used for events such as special event locations, converted industrial buildings, brandlands and museums, are also flooding on to the market and are making competition even more intense.

In this highly competitive market an increasing number of venues are trying to differentiate themselves from their competitors by using many different kinds of Unique Selling Propositions. Such unique selling propositions – for example, special services or the employees’ specific expertise – can, in principle, be used deliberately for general marketing purposes and also to target specific groups. However, the integration of art in the property or – taking a broader view of the concept of architecture as the “Mother of all arts” – the architecture of the property itself, can be such a feature, which the sales department can successfully deploy when marketing the property as a venue for events.

When considering architecture as real estate and a backdrop where only limited change is possible, various examples of venues for sports and events have demonstrated that, for a long time, the effect of architecture can be assigned a role that is

### “Architecture helps to represent the host city overall as a destination.”

both decisive and of long duration when it comes to positioning real estate vis-à-vis the competition and in the collective “event memory” of event organizers and visitors. When one considers architectural projects such as Olympiapark in Munich, built for the 1972 Olympic Games, or the National Stadium for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, known as the Bird’s Nest, these venues do not only have a high profile because of the international hallmark events for which they were built but they are equally famous because of their spectacular architecture.

Buildings erected for cultural purposes, such as the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg concert hall, which is still under construction, or the Sydney Opera House opened as far back as 1973 demonstrate how it is possible for a venue to occupy a firm place in public consciousness over many decades because of its architecture.

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Therefore, high sums are often invested in the construction of such venues over and above what would be required purely to fulfill the functional remit of the building. Architecture is not only consciously planned and executed with the subsequent uniqueness and marketability of the venue in mind but it also helps to represent and position the host city overall as a destination.

“Architecture as a recognition factor” – sometimes called the “Bilbao Effect” in destination marketing since the tremendous success of the Guggenheim Museum designed by Frank O. Gehry in the Northern Spanish city of Bilbao – does not only present opportunities to the operator of the venue concerned. If one proceeds under the assumption that the architecture of a venue is seen as an artistic framework which can only be changed to a limited extent, the uses of the property and the event concepts should be coordinated to accommodate this framework. This does not only lead to creative usage and event concepts but, under certain circumstances, may involve a greater outlay in both organizational and financial terms. The business of actually running events throws up the challenge of ensuring that the event passes off without a hitch, frequently using complex and



For his work "Ginkgoberry Gwa" the artist Ming Fay found his inspiration in the ginkgo forests that covered the State of Oregon in prehistoric times.



The Oregon Convention Center in Portland, USA is famous for the many art works it contains. The Foucault Pendulum – called "Principia" – is an art installation by the American artists Kristin Jones and Andrew Ginzell, which swings inside the north tower and is a fantasy solar system.

demanding room structures, and providing event participants with a "cohesive" event experience in which architecture is one element but it does not detract from the real subject of the event. If one looks beyond individual events, spectacular architecture for a venue may generally also result in higher costs for maintaining and running the building.

Seen separately from a venue's architecture, art can also play an important role in the atmosphere of an event. This is, for example, the case if museums host events and use their exhibition galleries to hold these events, which are not primarily linked with the exhibits on show.

Finally, art can be used as a decorative element and a design feature of a venue. Depending on the structure, it can be a mobile or static element. The Oregon Convention Center (OCC) in Portland, USA, which was opened in 1990, is an interesting venue in this respect. The OCC is, to a certain extent, a public artistic space with a stringent and multi-faceted artistic concept, which visitors can discover as part of an "Art Walking Tour". Even before visitors enter the building, they experience the Sound Garden where they hear the bronze temple bells, which were given to the city of Portland by their sister cities Sapporo in Japan and Ulsan in South Korea. Painting and enamel work in the foyer reflect the history and regional specialties of the State of Oregon and introduce color and emotion to enliven the area. Those attending the events see local attractions depicted on majolica tiles and in mosaics, even in the rest rooms.

Thanks to the numerous local references, art at the OCC is not only a decorative element but it also underlines its identification with Portland, as the event destination, and Oregon in general.

The significance of architecture and art within an operational context depend on how they are used at the venue, and they provide both opportunities and challenges for property managers and event organizers. However, what is probably not disputed is that architecture and art make a crucial contribution to the atmosphere of the building and the uniqueness of the venue and, in a market which is becoming increasingly competitive, they will perhaps even become more important factors when marketing the venue. However, in spite of this and against a backdrop of sustainable operation, the fact that there may be implications in respect of the outlay should be taken into account as early as the planning stage. This will avoid unpleasant surprises – for example, with regard to higher follow-up costs – when the venue is actually in operation at a later date. ■



## How medicine heals with creativity

### The art of healing

“Ars medicinae” – the “art of medicine” – is the name the Romans gave to medicine. The great thinkers of the Renaissance but Leonardo da Vinci, in particular, facilitated significant breakthroughs in both medicine and art, which all goes to show that the words art and medicine have been inseparable since ancient times. Today, too, there are many links. For instance, medicine makes use of art at specialist congresses in the form of exhibitions.

“For centuries art and medicine have been closely associated with each other. In ancient times, healing, sculpture and painting were all considered to be an art. Since Renaissance times leading painters produced anatomical atlases and therefore made a great contribution to medical research.” These are a few examples of the interaction between art and medicine given by Professor Hendrik Lehnert, Director of the Hospital I at Lübeck University Medical Center. The close connection is particularly evident in the field of anatomy through works such as da Vinci’s world-famous “l’uomo vitruviano”. The endocrinologist continues: “In addition, one of the most famous examples is probably ‘The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp’ by Rembrandt”.

Both art and medicine have developed in leaps and bounds over the last few centuries. According to Lehnert, even today, the human body remains a source of fascination and inspiration for many artists just as, by the same token, doctors continue to learn from pictorial representations. “The German term Heilkunst, which literally means “the art of healing” is still in common use.”

#### Oases of regeneration and inspiration at congresses

Even when attending continuing professional development courses, medics draw on the inspiring effect of art. Exhibitions have been an integral feature of specialist medical congresses for many years. Particularly noteworthy here are the private

art previews at the annual congress of the German Society of Internal Medicine (DGIM). Since 1998 the exhibitions have been a firm feature of the congress for internists. Professor Lehnert, President of the DGIM’s 2011 annual congress, explains: “The idea behind this is that it will be a place for delegates to relax but also provide intellectual stimulation, which both enhances the scientific program and is relaxing.” The art exhibition does not only offer the delegates a few moments to relax but, according to Lehnert, it is also a suitable forum for animated debates outside the specialist areas.

The exhibition at the DGIM’s 2011 annual congress received special praise. Lehnert says: “The idea this year was to move the art exhibition center stage as an inseparable part of the congress. This involved four artists creating their own ‘islands of art’ and these were embedded in a central position in the industrial exhibition and the flow of visitors.” Instead of separating art and medicine, this made it possible to highlight the how the two areas are interrelated.

Lehnert is sure that the art exhibition will also continue to be a permanent feature of the DGIM’s annual congress in years to come. “The definite positive feedback of congress delegates confirmed to us that we should maintain this tradition.” It was precisely the variety provided by art, both as part of a specific exhibition and the different concepts every year, that struck a definite chord with the delegates. ■

## High culture as a people’s event: the “autosymphonic” “Art also requires courage”

Carl Benz developed the automobile in Mannheim 125 years ago and thus invented one of the most revolutionary things in the history of the world. How does a town celebrate such an exceptional anniversary in an appropriate way? Those in charge of Mannheim, the “Grid city”(so called because it is laid out in a grid pattern), wanted an event for its citizens but a high-quality cultural event. It was intended that this would shed its light far beyond Mannheim, with a national and international reach. This wish was fulfilled with the world premiere of the “autosymphonic” in mid-September. It broadcast a central message: The automobile hails from Mannheim!

The “autosymphonic” was a genuinely extraordinary event in many ways. For one evening only the Friedrichsplatz in Mannheim in the heart of the city was transformed into a huge concert arena comprising 65,000 square meters. In this area over 250 musicians started up a sparkling display for all the senses. Its central feature was a piece by the composer Marios Joannou Elia, which was written especially for the anniversary. What was truly eye-catching was the Autoorchester, made up of eighty different vehicles played like instruments by 109 young percussionists

and 14 coaches from the Pop Academy Baden-Württemberg. The sound ranged from the squeaking of windshield wipers to closing the gas cap cover. They were incorporated into five parts of the symphony, performed by the SWR Baden-Baden and Freiburg symphony orchestra, the SWR Vocal Ensemble from Stuttgart and the children’s choir of the Stuttgart State Opera.

A spectacular picture, light and laser show set the scene for the music. Huge LED screens with a total surface of 600 square meters together with the facades of houses around the square

The people of Mannheim had never seen anything like it:  
 a sea of music, light, lasers and images transformed the area around Friedrichsplatz into a breathtaking stage.



and the water tower were used as surfaces on which to project the images. For example, red light and artificial fog were used to create the impression of a bubbling volcano – as a metaphor for the foundries which were the basis for automobile construction. Horst Hamann, the multimedia artist who hails from Mannheim, was responsible for this.

A further highlight was before the performance of “auto-symphonic” when the pop group “Söhne Mannheims” delighted their fans with an hour-long concert of their songs. They also came up with something very special for the evening and sang a new song “Mein erstes Wort war Auto” (Automobile was my first word). Six singers from the band were also involved in the symphony.

### Dream of the Autoorchester

The city of Mannheim did not only want to show with this exceptional event that such a revolutionary invention as the automobile came from “grid city” but the city also wanted to demonstrate its potential as a possible capital of culture in 2020. The project had been developed and managed by m:con – mannheim:congress GmbH, the conference and event agency entrusted with the task by the Mannheim city authorities. The “autosymphonic” performance was preceded by more than two years of planning, from the idea, concept development and planning through to implementation.

“Just at the time when we were beginning to think about the celebration of the automobile’s 125th birthday I read a newspaper interview with Elia. In this interview he said that his great dream was to write a symphony for an entire orchestra of automobiles,” said Michel Maugé, Managing Director of m:con. Soon after the article was published, he met the young composer and both came to an agreement quickly – the idea for the “autosymphonic” was born. The huge challenge for m:con was to develop the concept for the event. “One question which gave us plenty to think about was what the composition would be like. This was because the artist was given complete freedom to do what he wanted,” said Maugé. This course of action was really a huge risk – but it turned out to be the right thing. “We would definitely do the same again in the future.” Maugé emphasized: “Such an outcome, seen overall, can only develop if we trust the artists who have been commissioned and guarantee that they will be given a free hand.”

### Creative mixture attracted visitors

Elia himself wanted to establish a people’s event culture: “Right from the start, I had a vision for the ‘autosymphonic’: I wanted to create an innovative form of a demanding major work and, at the same time, define the aesthetics of the cultural event at an innovative level.” In total, Elia incorporated eight hundred different automotive sounds in his work. These were set



Young percussionists, trained especially for “autosymphonic”, played the automobiles like musical instruments.

to correspond to the symphonic instruments, thus creating a dynamic interchange. The music is composed to match a four-stroke engine of the patented motor car in 4/4 time.

The concept worked well – and, with 17,000 visitors, the performance was sold out and will definitely be remembered as part of the city’s history. “That would not have been the case if there had been a veteran car rally or a carnival with stands serving beer and sausages. Maugé emphasized: “It needed an event of this magnitude and artistic quality to clearly underline the significance of the automobile for Mannheim.” Success was also because of the combination of the familiar, such as the concert by the “Söhne Mannheims” and the new, never-seen-before Autoorchester made up of 80 vehicles, which were set up around Friedrichsplatz and the pergola superstructures built especially for the occasion. There were rarities and special items from the history of the automobile such as the Benz Patent-Motorwagen Nr. 1 from 1886, a Maserati Gran Turismo manufactured in 2009 and a Lanz Bulldog “Ackerluft” from 1930. This mixture attracted pop music fans as well as those interested in music and motor vehicles. But were the residents of the city also interested? Just the ten days required for set up, when automobiles were swinging through the air on cranes in order to reach their position, aroused their curiosity.

The client, the Mannheim city authority, was satisfied with the result in all respects: “If you want to raise your profile, you sometimes have to use unconventional methods. There is no doubt that ‘autosymphonic’ was a risk – but art also requires courage”, Mayor Dr. Peter Kurz said. “I was extremely impressed with the performance.” ■

The 60-minute “autosymphonic – unerhörte Augenblicke” DVD (without the concert by the “Söhne Mannheims”) can be ordered for €29.90 plus postage and packing via the website [www.autosymphonic.de](http://www.autosymphonic.de).





## “Benzational!”

autosymphonic.  
An enthusiastic audience of  
17,000 people experienced  
a symphony made up  
of 800 automotive sounds.

Concept design and realization  
by m:con.

m:con came up with an exemplary concept which succeeded in convincing the Mannheim city authorities and all sponsors. A unique and exclusive event that was well received by the international media. The occasion was to celebrate **125 years of the automobile** in Mannheim.  
A flagship project.

# Corporate Culture

## Facts about autosymphonic

### Organization

An impressive ensemble of nearly 300 artists

1,400 lights with over 40,000 digital channels  
Huge screens of light diodes covering  
600 square meters

### Internet

75,822 hits  
259,169 pages accessed  
36,309 calls asking for ticket information

### Social media

558,355 contributions accessed  
3,410 feedback items on contributions  
7,602 references to the event site

