

## INTRODUCTION

**@rt Outsiders Festival:  
The New Alchemists of Creation**

**P**articipating in the creation of a genetically modified and living work; touching a “biological wall” and seeing artificial life emerge; creating creatures that visibly evolve before our eyes within a virtual jungle; observing a living microcosm activated by our footsteps: This was the passionate journey that awaited visitors to the third @rt Outsiders international digital art festival, which took place 18 September–20 October 2002 in Paris and on <www.art-outsiders.com>.

The majority of the installations displayed works by such well-known bio-art practitioners as Eduardo Kac, Christa Sommerer, Laurent Mignonneau, Chu-Yin Chen and Daniel Mange, who have each re-created—in his/her own specific manner—micro universes or virtual ecosystems showing how a computer is able to simulate the complex nature of the living world, in a fashion that is both entertaining and poetic.

This groundbreaking artistic experience, however, was not limited solely to the exhibit’s central themes of biological art and artificial life. Other remarkable artwork experiments were also on display at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie. In the world of Magali Desbazeille and Siegfried Canto, visitors could walk in the wake of unknown passersby to hear these strangers’ private thoughts; contemplate the future of humanity via the image of Christophe Luxereau’s bio-robots; or discover new graphical and sound realms in the works of Miguel Almiron or Servovalve, who have developed their artistic representations based on revealed or delayed images.

What these new alchemists of creation conclusively show us are the unprecedented changes that are currently revolutionizing the arts. The poetry of a reinvented language, an artwork’s powerful message or the inspired vision of an artist—when it has radically renewed forms of conception or exhibition—leads us to this absolute “novelty,” dear to Baudelaire, and to this power of astonishment, which boosts our sensitivity to the level of emotion.

Above and beyond the interactive or technical virtuosity of these multimedia installations, the entire field of contemporary creation is being drastically changed, both through the participatory interaction that is inherent in this innovative realm, and through the aesthetic, philosophical, religious, social and ethical questions that are thus brought to light.

During this event, a series of conferences was given by the artists, researchers and internationally renowned academics, based on the displayed artworks. Fiction and 2D-3D animated films were also shown, giving everyone passionately interested in these issues both fun and accessible insights into these new forms of expression and these revolutionary realms, in which the imagination, nourished by electronics, leads each one of us into areas that have only begun to be explored.

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