“Only Connect”—this imperative defied human limitations, transformed cultures and exploded potentials, revolutionizing the era of the digital, embodying change and morphing our perception of the world and ourselves.

Our ability to connect is a means of disrupting convention in all aspects of humanity’s existence: communication, education and future construction. In art and design, we connect to make the unreachable reachable, the unimaginable imaginable; through creative endeavor we seek to play a significant role in reaching across cultures, disciplines and modern sensibilities.

Cairotronica serves as a catalyst by which such connections happen. The past connects with the future, history connects with the present, art connects with technology and new media, tradition connects with modernity and Cairo connects with the world.

Cairotronica is the first electronic and new media art symposium to take place in the Middle East; first held in 2016, it is a biennial event. Cairotronica brings together groundbreaking artists, pioneering engineers, ingenious designers, academics, international digital communities, students, art lovers and more from across Egypt, Africa, the larger region of the Middle East and North Africa, and the world. It offers a meeting of the minds where participants share, discuss, learn, talk and work. In essence, they truly connect with one another.

What is the role of electronic art in social, cultural and economic environments? How is technology disrupting the art scene and designing our future? How can new media/electronic art play the role of mediator between the inventors and the audience? These are some of the questions that intrigued the participants of Cairotronica 2016.

For seven days, Cairotronica offered a space for exploring fiction and the real. In an interactive environment of exhibitions, screenings, outdoor performances, academic conferences and workshops, Cairotronica celebrated the ways the digital world is redefining art and culture and encouraged participants to improve, reimagine and develop unexpected but useful ideas and collaborations.

Among the conferences hosted at Cairotronica in 2016 was the Consciousness Reframed research conference. The papers included in this section were presented at this conference under the rubric “Only Connect.”

The Consciousness Reframed series of conferences was initiated in 1997 in Wales by the Centre for Advanced Inquiry in the Interactive Arts (subsequently to become the Planetary Collegium at Plymouth University in 2003) and has since been hosted in more than a dozen cities across Europe, Scandinavia, North and South America, Japan and China—attracting delegates from some 25 countries and resulting in numerous publications. This is the second time the conference has been hosted in the Arab World.

The conference provides space for participants to question realities and raise the possibility of re-creation of meaning, leaving room for reinterpretation, transcendence and reconstruction.

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