FIVE DECADES AGO, aerospace pioneer and kinetic artist Frank J. Malina founded Leonardo: International Journal of the Contemporary Artist. He perceived art as a catalyst, working ahead of his time on demolishing the perceived sharp division between art and science. From June 2017 to the end of 2018, the Leonardo 50th Anniversary Celebrations paid homage to his vision and practice in 28 countries. As a Leonardo Board member I took on the honor of initiating international celebrations, codeveloping and copresenting many events with the hosts [1]. What follows is a combination of on-site impressions and quotes from our hosts.

The celebrations were independently conceptualized and presented local venues’ interests, motivations and inspirations, reflecting the complexity of today’s Leonardo community. The first, at ISEA 2017 in Manizales, Colombia, included a presentation of the city keys to executive editor Roger Malina, who participated and spoke at several celebrations, and concluded with electrifying Colombian music performed by local students. Host Felipe C. Londoño noted: “The Leonardo 50th Celebration made it possible to review the history of digital creation and the interrelation of art, science and technology in the current context. It also opened the possibility to work in networks with initiatives developed in open laboratories and the context of post-digital practices: bottom-up creation, indigenous cultures, low-tech visions, emerging groups, conceptual hybridizations, transparent technologies and open data” [2].

Bologna host Pier Luigi Capucci commented: “The general topic ‘The New and History’ proposed a reflection on the relationship between two seemingly opposing concepts that can coexist: The ‘new’ and ‘innovation’ have roots in history but they can project this heritage into the future thanks to the collaboration among arts, sciences and technologies.”

In February 2018 we celebrated in Parihaka, New Zealand, with workshops attended by Maori schoolchildren. Scholars and artists gathered at this historic Maori site. Host Ian Clothier reflected: “For me, the most extraordinary thing was the synchronous blend of knowledge across gender, culture and discipline. . . . So how would this blending of knowledge proceed? Incredibly there was not a clash but an acknowledgment that a new culture of knowledge was needed. To have these presentations interspersed with creative works and words from indigenous guardians of local waterways was an excellent statement of the contribution Leonardo can make to developing a sustainable civilization.”

Leonardo pioneers were acknowledged with special honors at Leonardo celebrations, and an emerging generation of artists was actively involved in many events, including dedicated youth workshops. In Budapest, following the conference, prezi.com organized a remarkable AI children’s workshop. Agoston Nagy wrote: “As a mentor and teacher it was fun to see younger participants—how open and constructive they are when facing new, unknown territories of creative possibilities.”

In Toronto, Adriana Ieraci organized an AI family workshop, noting: “In this intergenerational, interdisciplinary workshop participants made their own autonomous vehicles with sensors and motors and created their own logic circuits in order to experiment with the interaction of these diverse logics in an interactive system.”

In Mexico, Hugo Solis, having arranged a special student concert, commented: “The synergy between the international figures and our students will, for sure, remain in their memories.”

International recognition was significant: Ars Electronica awarded the 2018 Golden Nica for Visionary Pioneers of Media Art to the Leonardo community. The well-received Leonardo 50th exhibition at CyberArts 2018, cocurated by Genoveva Rückert and me, presented Leonardo’s heritage and its current activities. Organized by students and curated by Christa Sommerer, a performative “Leonardo Slam” achieved acclaim.

The events presented and developed by the hosts and their teams were related at the culminating Convening in San Francisco. The detailed story of each and every celebration exceeds the scope of this brief editorial; elements and observations of many others are therefore included in an online supplemental appendix.

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References and Notes
1. Of equal importance are the celebrations with which I was less involved, and I thank the event hosts for their dedication and work to celebrate Leonardo.
2. Personal correspondence. All quotes in this editorial as well as reflections from many other hosts can be found in the supplemental appendix at www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/leon/52/3.