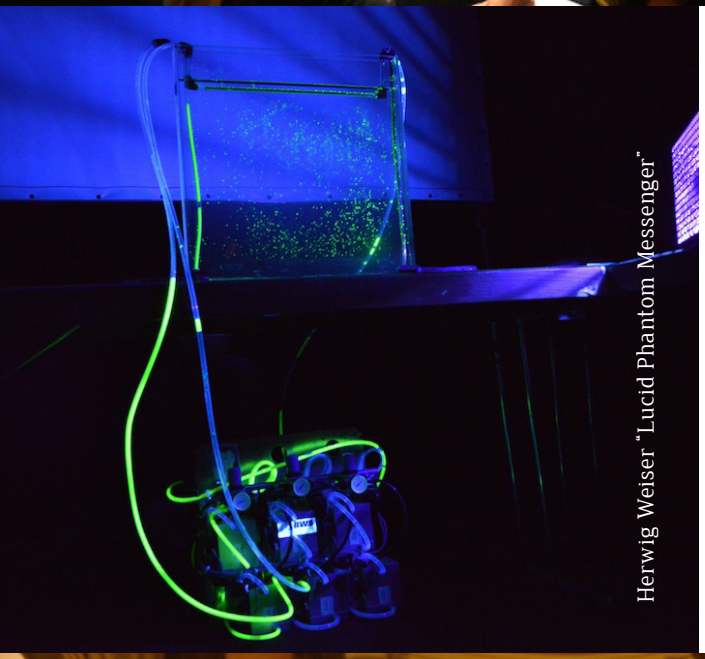
BIO·FICTION
SCIENCE ART FILMFESTIVAL

FESTIVAL REPORT

www.bio-fiction.com

BIO·FICTION Science, Art & Film Festival
23/10/14 - 25/10/2014 - Vienna, Austria

Talks & lectures at the NHM



Herwig Weiser "Lucid Phantom Messenger"

"It was a great pleasure to be there and engage in dialogue with people with so many different backgrounds, unified by their interest in biology and art."

BIO·FICTION Festival Visitor

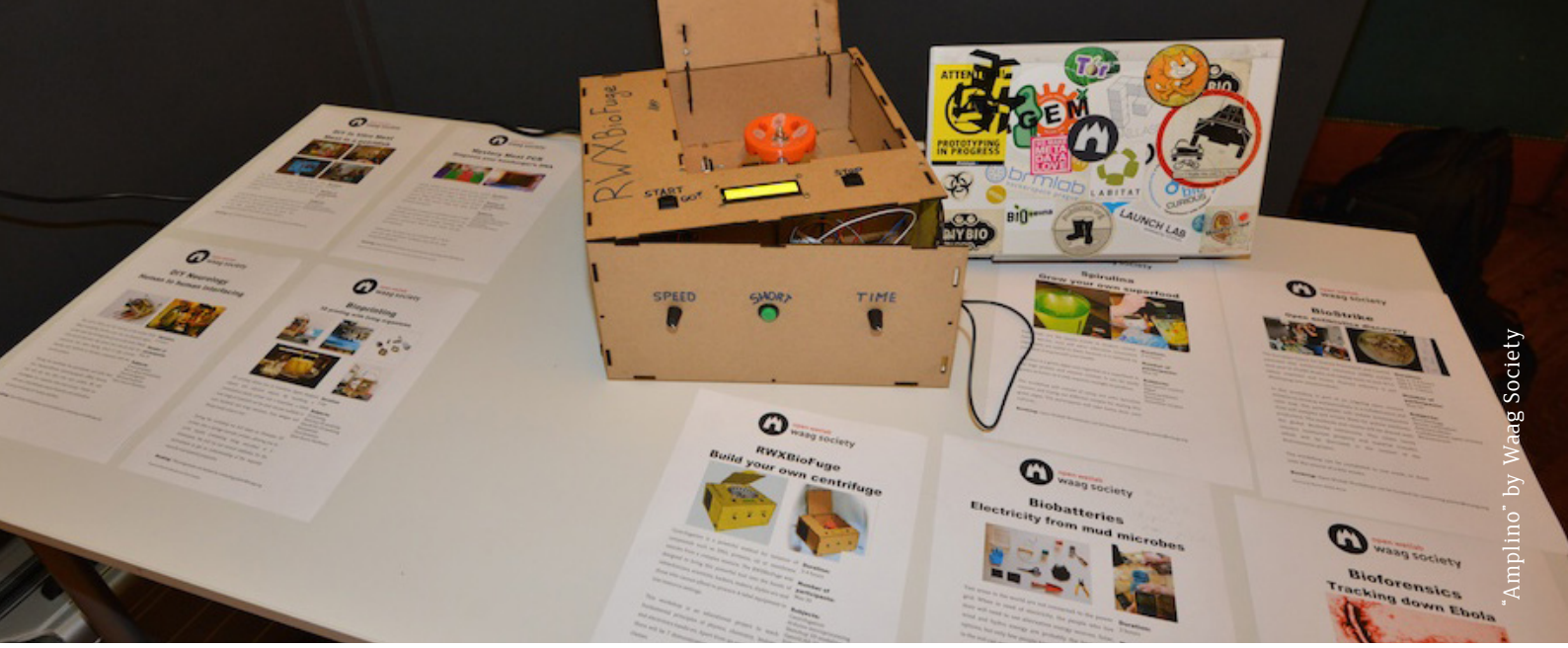
Gala evening at the NHM

"Yeastograms" by Pavillon 35

Summary of the BIO·FICTION Science Art Film Festival 2014

The second BIO·FICTION Science Art Film Festival took place from 23 - 25 October, 2014. The international synthetic biology festival was organised by Vienna-based research and science communication company Biofaction with the support of the Museum of Natural History in Vienna, Austria.
BIO·FICTION discussed, documented and explored the emerging field of synthetic biology and initiated a public discourse on this current and highly relevant topic. In order to facilitate this creative conversation, the event featured a large variety of content: 32 presentations, panel discussions, 5 do-it-yourself biology demos, 3 art performances, and of course film screenings.

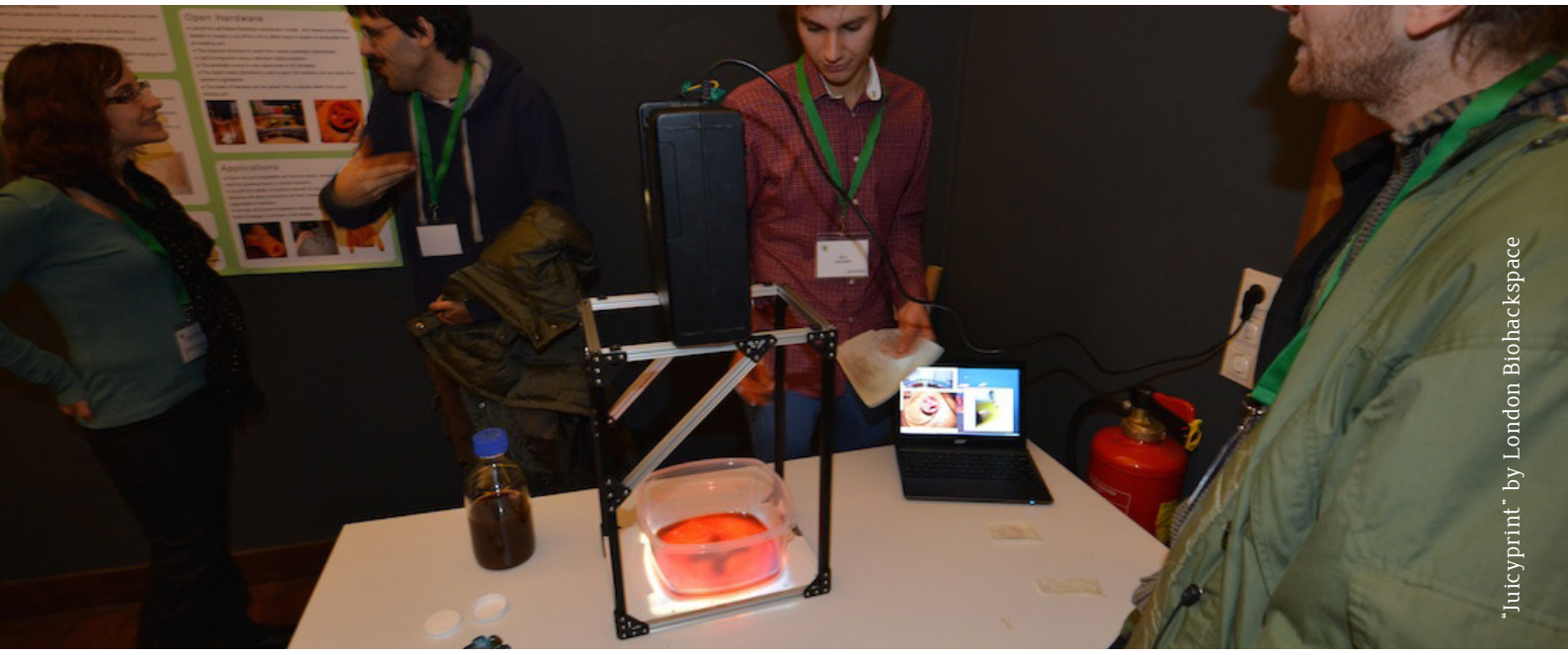
The participants came from a wealth of backgrounds, including science and engineering, the social sciences, cultural studies, amateur biology, the military, film making, art and design.
In accordance with its objective, all BIO·FICTION events were open to the public and free of charge. We were honoured to welcome not only locals, but also visitors who travelled from abroad to join us for a fantastic three days. Like its first edition in 2011, when it was launched successfully as the world's first festival of its kind and was taken on a tour of three continents, the second BIO·FICTION festival was a highly rewarding event which connected diverse people and facilitated new avenues of discussion.



"Amplino" by Waag Society

The trans-disciplinary symposium was set in Vienna's beautiful Museum of Natural History and featured a program of presentations and discussion groups, which explored, amongst other topics, bioengineering, bioart, ethics, responsible research and innovation, intellectual property, entrepreneurship as well as do-it-yourself biology. Tying into a Bio-Commons event held after BIO·FICTION ended, the festival offered a highlight on DIY-Bio groups and their projects with interactive demonstrations:

- "Grow Your Ink" by La Pailasse, and presented by Thomas Landrain
- "bento·lab" by a London collective, and presented by Philip Boeing
- "Juicyprint" by London Biohackspace, and presented by Ilya Levantis
- "Amplino" by Waag Society, and presented by Pieter van Boheemen
- "Yeastograms" by Pavillon 35, and presented by Günter Seyfried, Lucas Czjzek and Niki Passath



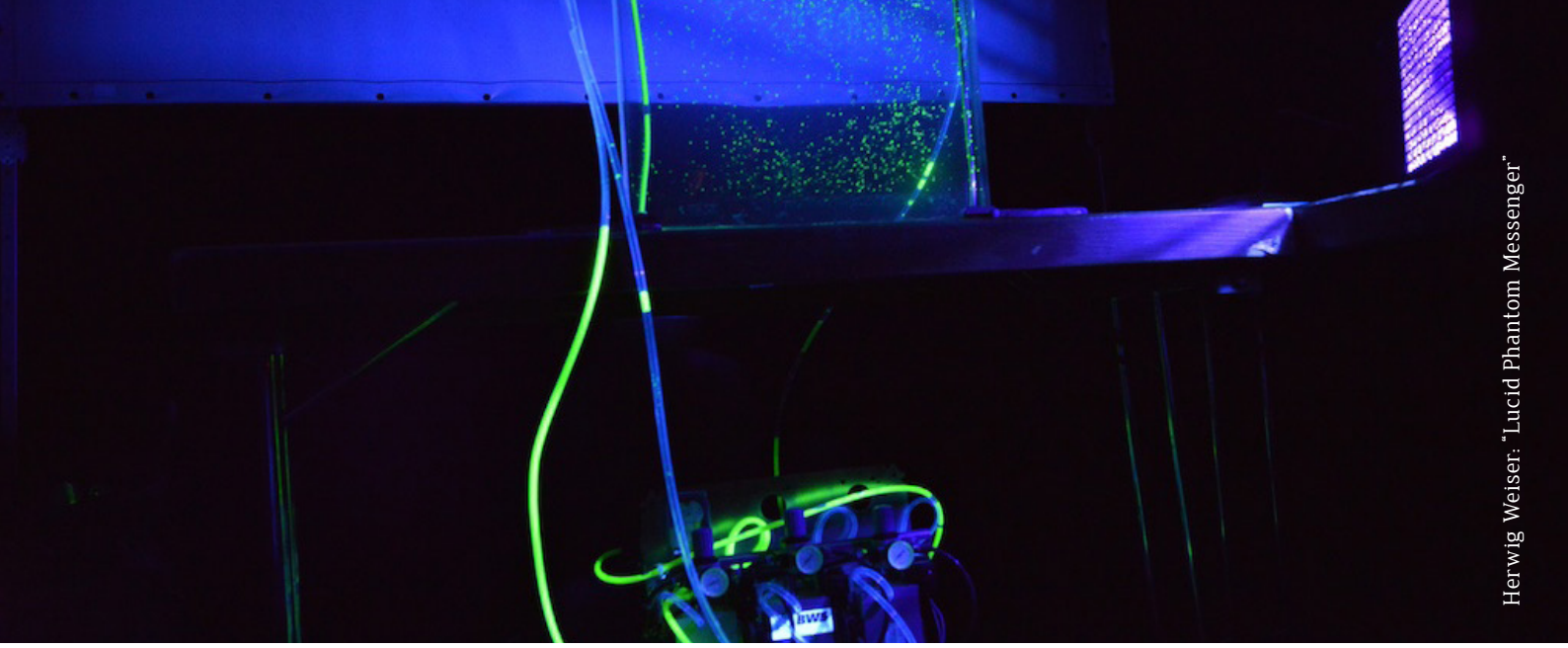
"Juicyprint" by London Biohackspace

"Grow Your Ink" by La Pailasse

As a different but equally interactive activity, Kairos Society's Nadine Bongaerts held a two hour long workshop on entrepreneurship and collaborative start up ideas.

For its artistic explorations, BIO·FICTION was fortunate enough to utilize the Narrenturm (Fool's Tower), continental Europe's oldest building for the accommodation of mental health patients, which now houses the Pathological-Anatomical Museum. The historic building and its specimen collection served as an eerie and fantastical backdrop to Klaus Spiess and Lucie Strecker's evocative performance piece "Hare's Blood+". The piece contrasts the use of dead animal matter in artwork, with its value of liveness for commercial and genetic purposes. The artists consider concepts of ‚living money' when the artwork is consigned to its "collectors" in a performative auction.

"Hare's Blodd+" by Klaus Spiess & Lucie Strecker



Herwig Weiser: "Lucid Phantom Messenger"

Set in an exhibit room of the Natural History Museum, Herwig Weiser introduced and temporarily installed and demonstrated his current work in progress "Lucid Phantom Messenger". The piece consists both of a live protocell-like experiment and its cinematographic restitution; it brings together ingredients of a cristal garden with luminescent so-called nanodots from the forefront of scientific research, which mix and change in a live life-like hypnotic process.

Also set up in the Natural History Museum were artefacts from the US based Center for Post-Natural History that features a curated collection of genetically modified organisms, like the skull of the first spider silk protein "steel-goats", the leaf of a genetically engineered chestnut tree, or the supersafe bacteria E. coli 1776.

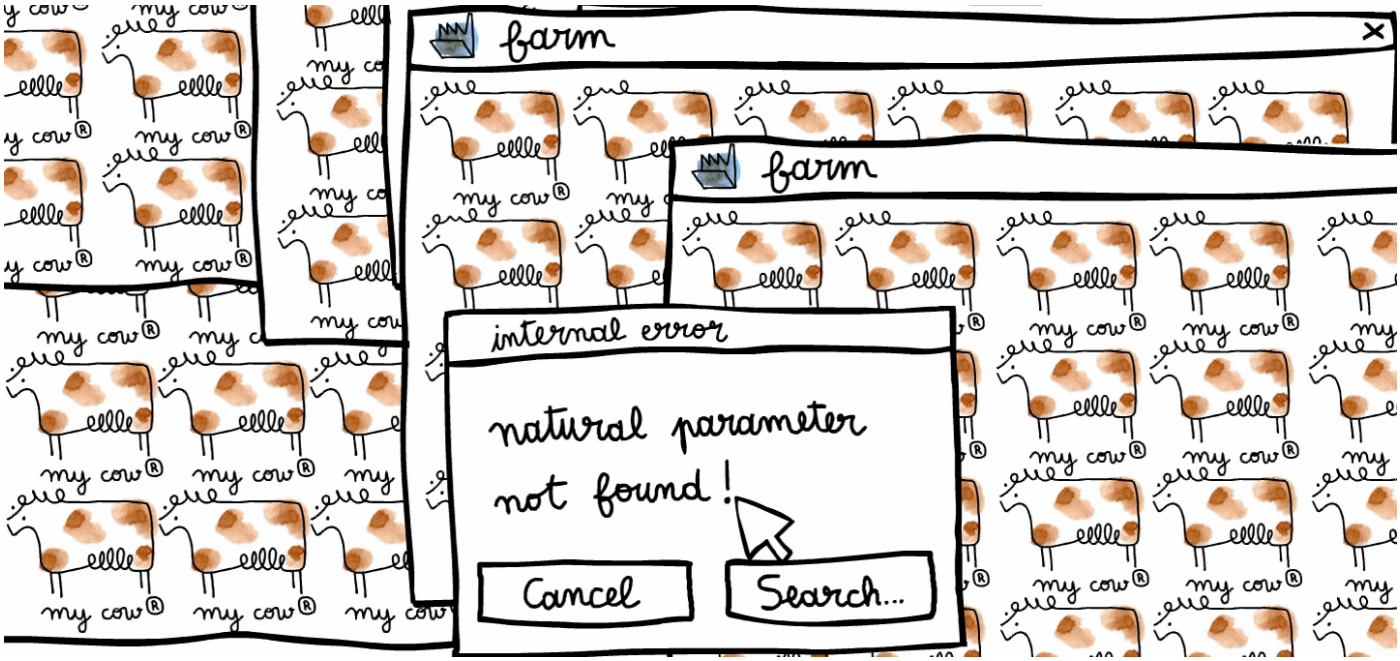
Center for Post-Natural History

Film screening at the Bellaria Cinema

One cornerstone of the festival was of course the international short film competition, which introduced documentaries, animation and fiction shorts that explored the thematic. Our call for submissions was answered by 100 submissions from 17 countries and four continents. The 60 shortlisted entries were widely diverse; judging them was certainly not undemanding for our international jury of nine tasked with reviewing the films and selecting the winners.

The screenings were held at the nearby Bellaria film theatre, one of Vienna's oldest film theatres with its establishment in 1911. The award ceremony took place during the grand BIO·FICTION gala in the Museum of Natural History's magnificent dome hall.

The award for best animation short went to Louis Rigaud's "Copy & Clone", a clip which discusses an extremely serious subject with a side order of humour: the animation displays the effects of biotechnologies on animal food industries through the window of a computer. What happens when the "copy and paste" commands of our devices step into real life?



Louis Rigaud: 'Copy & Clone'

Film still Arjan Brentjes: "Hybris"

The winner of the award for best fiction short was Arjan Brentjes with "Hybris". In a 1960s talk show a scientist discusses the future possibility of indefinite human life. Through a mixture of animation, photorealism and visual aesthetics from the 1960s, the film takes us on a nostalgic journey into the past in order to explore our future.

Tobias Revell was awarded best documentary for his short (mockumentary) film "New Mumbai", which chronicles the fictional journey of a documentary filmmaker to the Dharavi slums of India in order to film a strange phenomenon involving genetically engineered mushrooms. The fungi serve as a new type of infrastructure providing heat, light and building material.

The Special Prize of the Jury, going to a film which cannot be limited to one category and which the Jury would like to highlight especially, went to Adi Gelbart's "Vermin". Three creatures mysteriously appear on Earth and start to use giant vegetables as components in enormous organic machines. The short film takes us on a fun and dissonant, psychedelic Sci Fi B-movie trip.

Film still: Tobias Revell, "New Mumbai"

Herwig Weiser "Lucid Phantom Messenger"

Following the festival, BIO·FICTION will go on tour and bring a selection of the best films to places around the world. In 2014 we were invited to Linz, Austria and Waldkraiburg, Germany. For 2015 the next BIO·FICTION on tour stops will be in Berlin, Ljubljana, and Kiev with further plans for Beijing, Valencia, Wageningen etc.

See: http://bio-fiction.com/2014/
Contact: Schmidt@biofaction.com

BIO·FICTION was supported by the EC FP7 funded project SYNENERGENE.

Gala evening with panel discussion at the NHM

BIO·FICTION

SCIENCE ART FILMFESTIVAL