



PRESS RELEASE

February 2019

META MARATHON 2019 A digital festival on robotics

Live, love, party, and work with robots non-stop for 42 hours: from March 15 to March 17, 2019, the META MARATHON 2019 is dedicated to the subject of robotics. Not only can visitors participate in workshops, talks, and performances, they can also share their living space with robots, including the opportunity to spend the night at the NRW-Forum and meet arguably the most famous robot in the world, Sophia.

What happens when robots leave the industrial context and become part of our everyday lives? What must society be prepared for if automated processes are being performed by machines and decisions are being made without human intervention? How do robots change our actions and feelings? Are machines becoming more human or are human emotions becoming more mechanical? Can robots help us relax and slow down, and what does a culture of intelligent robotics look like?

Digitalization and its consequences are among the greatest societal challenges of our time. The META Marathon brings together digital visionaries, artists, researchers, creatives, and visitors at a 42-hour international digital festival: From March 15 to March 17, 2019, the META Marathon is dedicating a whole weekend to the subject of robotics and will transform the NRW-Forum into a living lab where visitors can participate in workshops, talks, and performances and live together with robots. With Sophia, Alter 3, Marco Donnarumma & Margherita Pevere, Johannes Grenzfurthner, Karin Harrasser, Christiane Miethge, Nadja Buttendorf, Claire Cunningham, Fei Liu, Shirley Ogolla, the Iceberg Robots, and many more.

“The META Marathon is a digital happening and an invitation to participants to dive into the near future and contribute to an open, critical, and creative process. The festival leaves the concept of mainstream conferences far behind. It is a discursive space in which digital modernity is explored in a festival atmosphere. META uncovers the importance of technology away from the supremacy of Silicon Valley and aims to offer a multi-perspective, inclusive discourse that participants can help to shape,” says festival director Jasmin Grimm.



Meet special guest Sophia, hack the smart home, and build robots

She gives speeches to the United Nations, shakes hands with Angela Merkel and Cristiano Ronaldo, was on the cover of Vogue, and is now coming to Düsseldorf for the first time for the META Marathon: Sophia, the high-tech wonder from Hanson Robotics, is the most human-like robot in the world, famous for her hitherto unique gestures and facial expressions and her ability to conduct complex conversations. Made possible by the Identity Foundation, you can watch her live and on site at the META Marathon in conversation with Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Hyun Kang Kim and Dr. phil. Rainer Zimmermann.

Sophia is a particularly prominent example that makes it clear that the role of robots in our daily lives is no longer that of mere language assistants or vacuum cleaners. *Sophia* is even the only robot in the world to be granted citizenship of a country. The android *Alter 3* by the Japanese roboticist Hiroshi Ishiguro can independently conduct an opera. Intelligent robotics makes our environment smart and self-sufficient, and produces cultural forms of expression. Prostheses expand and alter notions about our bodies. Alongside the five main topics **Uncanny Love, Wellness Update, Being Human, Being Robot, More Than Human**, and **Body 2.0**, the META Marathon will address the relationships between man and machine.

Johannes Grenzfurthner carries out research in the field of sexuality and technology, is a co-founder of Arse Elektronika, a conference for sex and tech, and Roboexotica, an international cocktail robotics festival. He addresses techno-hype and human-machine relationships critically and ironically. At the META Marathon his workshops will offer an insight into working with robots, and he will also bring robots that serve cocktails and love robots.

Can technology help you to feel yourself? What can a life in sync with technology and a society with robots look like? This is what artist **Nadja Buttendorf** asks at wellness courses with her smartphone. And what happens when the things themselves become intelligent? Artist **So Kanno** explores this in his interactive installation – a completely smart living room – in which he stages an Internet of Things drama with visitors.

The symposium *Was der Körper vermag und verweigert. Teilhabe und Design in der Medizintechnik* (What the body can do and refuses. Participation and design in medical technology) focuses on the prosthetic body, somewhere between medical technical innovation and normalization trends. In cooperation with the themed festival **Hi, ROBOT! The Human Machine Festival**, organized by **tanzhaus nrw** and curated by



Karin Harrasser. With contributions from design theory and practice, media history, the philosophy of technology, science fiction, and dance.

The opening performance *Eingeweide* (Guts) by **Marco Donnarumma & Margherita Pevere** moves between dance theater, sound art, and technology. In the choreography, two human bodies, an artificially intelligent prosthesis, and out-of-body organs experience a kind of ritual fusion of body and artificial intelligence.

There is an exclusive advance opening of the exhibition **Körperwende (Body Turn) – from Nam June Paik to Hiroshi Ishiguro** for META visitors, which will be on view at the NRW-Forum from March 29. The exhibition presents artistic positions from over fifty years that grapple with questions about human, artificial, and inanimate bodies – from Nam June Paik's first non-human action artist in history, *Robot K 456*, to Pinar Yoldas' *Kitty AI*, to Hiroshi Ishiguro's opera-conducting android *Alter 3*.

There will also be film screenings and talks on issues from the fields of neurobiology, cognitive science, media science, medicine, and ethics, robotics workshops for adults and children, such as the soccer robot workshop with the Iceberg robots, and a hackathon with students and professors of the KISD – Köln International School of Design.

All information about the program and participants can be found at:

<https://www.metamarathon.net/program>

<https://www.metamarathon.net/participants>

The entrance fee is 42€, reduced 25€, which includes 42 hours of festival, food, drinks, and a place to sleep. Information on tickets and the program is available at:

<https://www.metamarathon.net/>.

Festival Director 2019: Jasmin Grimm

Jasmin Grimm is a curator, lecturer, and cultural entrepreneur. With a background in Social & Business Communication (M.A.) from the University of the Arts Berlin, she designs international exhibitions, festivals, and conferences at the intersection of art, society, and technology. She is the program director of Retune – a Berlin platform for digital art. Among other things, she has worked for ARTE Creative, Public Art Lab, TINCON Teenager Internetwork Convention, the International Alumni Center of the Robert Bosch Foundation, and has been the program advisor for re: publica for their Arts & Culture topic cluster since 2017.



Partners

The META Marathon 2019 is in cooperation with HI, ROBOT! Das Mensch Maschine Festival (The Human Machine Festival), which takes place from March 13 to March 31, 2019 in Düsseldorf. HI, ROBOT! is a themed festival about the future of the human body, initiated by the tanzhaus nrw in cooperation with the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf and the Black Box – Kino im Filmmuseum, and funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation. www.hi-robot.de

META is supported by the Beisheim Foundation and the KomKuk, and is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Paul Kohtes, founder of the Identity Foundation (<https://www.identity-foundation.de/>) supports META MARATHON.

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