

Shouldn't we Finally Stop Funding Arts and Culture?

By H.E. Max Haarich, 21 MAY 2019

How can the state capital Munich be so narrow-minded as to give away the tax money of its citizens to artists? They will only take the money to quit their real job. And then they will just make strange music or paint non-decorative nonsense all day long. Isn't it a lot more urgent here and now to promote start-ups? They would develop autonomous electric cars for our money: that strengthens Munich as a business location - for the benefit of all!

Art is the Mother of Innovation

Those who think so may have forgotten where mankind comes from. We owe almost all the technological innovations that brought us from the caveman to Homo Digitalis [to artists and cultural workers](#). Stone carving was invented as early as 500,000 BC to produce cult objects such as Venus figures. Only about 5,000 B.C. the first wheel was created with this technique. The first ideas of artificial intelligence (AI) go back at least to the figure of the "[Golem](#)" in the medieval Talmud. And the first vehicle electrics was the lighting, which was to make the [sled of Bavaria's King Ludwig II](#) even more magnificent. Research institutions and technology companies may have built the first autonomous electric car. But many of the technologies required for this originated from artistic activities, without which they might not have been invented until today.

Art Provides Innovations for the Benefit of All

Art is not only a source of inspiration, but also the most effective instrument for [aligning technological progress with the needs of citizens](#). Art helps 1) to make a technology accessible and comprehensible. AI, for example, is in itself a completely invisible technology and only thanks to creative visualizations do we have an idea of how it works. Such representations facilitate 2.) the critical reflection of technological progress. In the age of the AI, for example, [science fiction](#) is gaining massively in importance: works such as Orwell's "1984" anticipated the effects of surveillance technologies on the privacy of each individual already 70 years ago. Art then supports 3.) the implementation of innovations that reconcile social progress with human needs. For example, artists recently developed an [attachment for Smart Home Assistants](#), which restores privacy in the use of these devices. Is such a thing still art at all? Who can say that? But it is definitely important and valuable; especially here in Munich.

Art and Technology: Potentials for Munich

Munich has first-class research facilities, outstanding industrial partners and a highly qualified workforce. Thanks to the generous support of future technologies such as AI, our city is developing into the [epicenter of innovation](#) in Germany and perhaps worldwide. All the more necessary are artistic measures that accompany this development and communicate it to society. All the greater is the opportunity for artists, scientists and engineers to jointly create utopian innovations for the benefit of all. This requires modern formats of art-technology cooperation that go beyond pure digital, media or scientific art. International pioneers include the "[MIT Media Lab](#)" (US) and the "[Ars Electronica Future Lab](#)" (AU). In view of the imminent AI revolution, the [EU](#) is also increasingly offering the prospect of funding for art-technology cooperations geared to the common good.

Munich has the potential to jump on this bandwagon immediately and very soon take on a leading international role. This would not only open up completely new networks and fields of activity for Munich artists. The entire business location of Munich would benefit from such innovation cooperations oriented towards the common good, and the art and culture industry would finally regain its deserved social position.