Open Call: Artist-in-Residence Program
Staging Realities
X-Reality-Lab

Mozarteum University invites media artists and artist collectives to apply for a funded residency to create an interactive, multi-user XR performance in the newly built X-Reality-Lab. Fully operational in winter 2025, the Lab features cutting-edge projection-based XR technology and is supported by the open-source software framework mozXR developed in cooperation with the Ars Electronica Futurelab. Selected artists will get the opportunity to explore the boundaries of XR technologies in the X-Reality-Lab and receive up to 40,000 EUR for the production of their artwork, which will be presented during the Lab's opening festival in March 2026.

Introduction

Extended Reality (XR) and the technological devices that enable XR open up inconceivable possibilities that we are only beginning to explore. Artistic approaches are very strong in exploring new avenues and breaking new ground for positive scenarios for the adaptation of new technologies, while at the same time identifying their potential risks. This is also true for Artificial Intelligence (AI). Both developments are intertwined, as AI can support the design of interactive elements, (3D) design processes and more within an XR setting. While AI and XR have and will have an impact on most aspects of human life, art regularly adapts these technological developments early on, thus taking an active role in shaping the process of adapting new technologies.

With the aim of creating space for such explorations, Mozarteum University is currently building the X-Reality-Lab. An infrastructure that opens up opportunities for students, researchers and developers to experiment with projection-based virtual reality and a new scope for interactive X-Reality. The 165m², 8-metre-high lab creates an immersive XR experience with 3D projections on the front and side walls, as well as the floor, and 3D sound from more than 80 speakers and subwoofers. Optical motion tracking systems capture movement. In addition, LiDAR lasers create a touch-floor tracking contact with the floor. The lab is currently under construction and expected to be fully operational in the fall of 2025. It is funded by FFG and co-funded by the European Union under the EFRE program. As part of this project, Mozarteum University also aims to set new standards and create a common software framework by providing a flexible, open-source wrapper software for multiscreen XR infrastructures, called mozXR. It is also under construction and will be

designed to lower the threshold for users to produce XR projects for projection-based XR infrastructures such as the X-Reality-Lab.

In this call, we are seeking media artists or artist collectives to realize their own artistic concepts using the X-Reality-Lab at Mozarteum University in Salzburg. Artists are invited to create a multi- user, hybrid, interactive art performance. For the realization of the artwork, the artist receives up to 40.000 EUR that should cover artists fees, material costs, travel and accommodation costs and potential subcontracting (e.g. developers, designers, musicians, actors etc.) costs. Further, the artist shall receive on-site support from Mozarteum University staff for setting up the work in the X-Reality-Lab. The core development of the project, however, must be carried out by the artist(s) or collective themselves.

What we offer

In this call, we provide the selected artists exclusive access to the X-Reality-Lab at Mozarteum University in Salzburg, Austria, which is under construction and opening its doors in winter of 2025. This provides the opportunity to explore the boundaries of this projection-based XR infrastructure, by producing an artwork to be implemented at the Lab. Artworks created in this residence program are planned to be shown at the opening festival of the X-Reality-Lab in March 2026.

What we look for

We are seeking for a media artist or artist collective to create an artwork – ideally, though not exclusively, within the realm of performing arts - that explores the boundaries of the X-Reality-Lab and its technical options in an innovative way. This residency is ideal for someone eager to contribute to the establishment of a new infrastructure for media art and setting the stage with experimental artwork. As the X-Reality-Lab and its wrapper software are still in development, access will be limited to a select group of users, offering an exclusive opportunity to engage with cutting-edge technology in an innovative setting.

Assessment criteria

The application and artistic concept must integrate the following aspects for the submission to be considered for the final selection:

- **Creative use of the X-Reality-Lab**
  The proposed artwork must be conceptualized and developed to be shown in the X-Reality-Lab, integrating its technical components. Preferably, it includes interactive components.

- **Experimental work on using XR technologies**
  XR technology in general and the X-Reality-Lab as well as the software-framework mozXR in particular, enable new ways to use XR technologies. The proposed artwork should experiment with the boundaries of these technologies and contribute to exploring new ways for making use of them.

- **Overall artistic excellence**
  The overall artistic excellence of the concept and its novelty are important aspects in the assessment of applications.

- **Experience with Unreal Engine, Unity3D or Touchdesigner**
  Developing and implementing projects in the X-Reality-Lab requires specific technical knowledge. The software framework mozXR developed for creating projects in the X-Reality-Lab is made for Unreal Engine, Unity3D and Touchdesigner. Experience with one of these software engines is vital for the applicant. Applicants should have the skills and experience needed to create and implement their artwork.

Application requirements

Interested artists are invited to send expressions of interest through the Application Form including:

- **Curriculum Vitae**
  Include contact information from all team members (max. 2 pages per person, see privacy information).

- **Proposal**
  A detailed proposal including the artistic concept, intended aesthetics, and a technical description of how the X-Reality-Lab components will be used (max. 10 pages).

- **Proposal Introduction Video**
  A short video (max. 5 minutes) presenting your project idea.
  If the file is too large to send by email, please send it via a file sending service (the expiry date of the link must be at least 5 days) or send us a link to a video platform.

- **Budget**
  Budget plan for the estimated costs of the proposed project (artists fees, material costs, travel and accommodation, potential subcontracting)

- **Supplementary Materials**
  Images, videos (link), and/or descriptions of previous works involving media technologies. (max. 3 previous works)

An agreement with Mozarteum University on the exploitation rights will be concluded in later stages of the selection process.

Available technical components

The X-Reality-Lab, its technical components and the software-framework mozXR are described in the technical rider (see link).

For the conceptualization and production of the artwork for this Open Call, the artist is

required to work with the technologies described in the technical rider. Either the applicants have direct experience with these technologies and software, or they collaborate with someone who does via subcontracts. The X-Reality-Lab team is available for implementation on-site but has no resources for doing the development of the project. Costs for subcontracting must be covered by the budget available for the artwork production. Information about the subcontracting must be stated in the application.

What we provide

- **40.000 EUR in available budget**

  The selected artist or artist collective is contracted by the Mozarteum University and will receive a fee of 40.000 EUR for the production and realization of the artwork. This budget should cover all costs including working hour, material costs, travel to and accommodation in Salzburg and potential subcontracts (e.g. developers, designers, actors, musicians) for both the production phase (of which a minimum of 3 weeks in Salzburg in January, February 2026) and the presentation in March 2026.

- **Access to mozXR**

  To support realizing the artwork at the X-Reality-Lab, selected artists will be provided with exclusive access to the mozXR framework to develop the project in Unreal Engine, Unity3D or Touchdesigner and to get easy and direct access to the available technical components. Tutorial videos and documentation for mozXR will be produced and as far as they are already available, these resources will be provided. Mozarteum University staff cannot give instructions on how to use the software.

- **On-site Support**

  The X-Reality-Lab team will support the artist in setting up the artwork in X-Reality-Lab. This also includes access to the X-Reality-Lab for testing.

Application Process & Timeline:

- **Application period: May 23, 2025 – July 13, 2025**

  Applicants to this open call are expected to provide the documents listed in the application requirements.

  Please send us your application in a **single pdf file** + **one proposal introduction video** to moz.xr@moz.ac.at.

- **Selection**
  - **Shortlist (until end of July 2025)**

    The review of the applications received and selection of artworks to be realized-in the X-Reality-Lab will be done by a jury of members of Mozarteum University and Ars Electronica. In a first step, the jury will select a shortlist of applications.

- **Interviews (first half of August 2025)**

  The shortlisted artists or artist collectives are invited to a (online) meeting with the jury.

- **Final Selection (until end of August 2025)**

  By mid-August, the jury takes a final selection of up to three artworks and informs the shortlisted applicants. If there are no suitable applications for this Open Call, the jury has the right to choose none of the applications and announce a new open call, in which applicants are allowed to participate again with a proposal.

- **Contracting (until end of October 2025)**

  With selected artists the contract is drafted and negotiated. Timelines are discussed and any other legal requirements and budgets are agreed upon.

- **On-site Visit and Delivery of mozXR (first half of November 2025)**

  Selected artists visit the X-Reality-Lab and have a kick-off meeting with the X-Reality-Lab team. Depending on which engine will be used in the project, the software framework mozXR will either be already available or in Dezember 2025.

- **Production (until Dezember 2025)**

  The production phase starts immediately after finalizing the contract and takes place off-site.

- **On-site Residency (January – February 2026)**

  In this phase (minimum of 3 weeks in Salzburg) the production of the artworks will be finalized by the artists and tested on-site at the X-Reality-Lab.

- **Presentation (March 5-8, 2026)**

  The developed artworks will be shown during the opening festival of the X-Reality-Lab. Next to the showing, artists are expected to participate in dissemination events that take place at the festival such as a panel discussion about XR and XR technologies.

Please **send us your application in a single pdf file + one proposal introduction video** to moz.xr@moz.ac.at. If the files are too large to send by email, please send them via a file sending service (the expiry date of the link must be at least 5 days) or send us a link to a video platform.

If you have any questions regarding the open call, please contact us on moz.xr@moz.ac.at.