

Platform 12 | Dialog between Research, Art and Business A cooperative project involving Robert Bosch GmbH, Akademie Schloss Solitude and Wimmelforschung

Renningen – From Platform 12 on the twelfth floor of the central building, the view extends far beyond the grounds of the Bosch Research Campus in Renningen near Stuttgart. The approximately 1,000-square-meter experimental area serves the researchers as a place where they can develop new ideas – across disciplines and irrespective of the organizational structure of the company or the day-to-day work in the office and laboratory. The special thing about Platform 12, however, is the exchange of thoughts and ideas with artists. The aim of the three partners – Robert Bosch GmbH, Akademie Schloss Solitude and Wimmelforschung – is to establish a new form of innovation culture through the exchange of thoughts and ideas between the worlds of research and art.

As the innovation manager in Corporate Sector Research and Advance Engineering of Robert Bosch GmbH, Dr. Birgit Thoben is also responsible for the development of Platform 12. She believes that the early phase of the innovation process is decisive: »Having room to breathe is the prerequisite for creating innovations. In the best-case scenario, the researchers in Platform 12 will come up with ideas that they weren't even looking for.« Platform 12 supports this process of early idea generation by stimulating and inspiring people to change their ways of looking at things in a variety of ways. In addition, it offers a wide range of opportunities to implement initial ideas with the aid of various materials and tools and for spontaneously exchanging ideas with experts from other disciplines. Besides a library, the think tank and rooms for innovation workshops, the most prominent room is the »base«.

The space and its contents were conceived and developed by the Wimmelforschung artist duo, Maren Geers and Thomas Drescher, in close cooperation with Birgit Thoben. The design of the rooms deliberately presents a counterpoint to the working environment in the offices and laboratories, including artistic elements that irritate and stimulate reflection, as well as individual pieces that represent a part of Bosch history, such as a workbench from the first Bosch plant in Stuttgart-Feuerbach. The design and function of the rooms infiltrate existing structures and thus create a space that serves not only as a source of ideas and inspiration, but also as a place that raises questions. »We understand Platform 12 not only as a physically designed space, but also as an environment that triggers the critical reflection of the reality found there,« is how Thomas Drescher, one of the artists from the Wimmelforschung duo, sums up the conceptual approach.

A special characteristic of the room is the continuous presence of artists. Within the framework of what is known as the »Wimmel Research Fellowship«, they work for three months each as indirect observers and initiators in order to exchange ideas with Bosch researchers and to work on their own and joint artistic projects. The stipend is awarded and organized by the Akademie Schloss Solitude, in cooperation with Wimmelforschung and financed by Robert Bosch GmbH. With the art, science & business program, the Akademie Schloss Solitude is able to boast 15 years of extensive experience in the interdisciplinary combination of art, science and business. With Platform 12, the exchange between these areas is now being developed further in order to enable



both research and art to develop new ways of thinking and perspectives outside their usual structures and fields of practice.

The partners have coined the term »**Experimental Lateral Venture**« (ExLaVent) in order to describe the experimental and unconventional character of the project: Platform 12 is a space that encourages lateral thinking. On the one hand, the presence of the artists takes the researchers out of their daily work routine and encourages them to deal with unusual working structures and ways of thinking. The artistic point of view helps Bosch associates to reflect on and rethink ideas. On the other hand, the artists also move beyond their normal working context and are encouraged to orient themselves in a foreign environment. As a result, art becomes effective outside the context of art and gains a new scope for action. The most important distinguishing feature putting this project apart from traditional artist-in-residence programs in companies is that the artists do not develop works of art during the stipend period that refer to specific in-house research content. On the contrary, the open-minded encounter and the process of dialog between the artists and researchers are the aim of the joint experiment.

In 2017, the three partners already look back on two years of collaboration between art and research. Ten Wimmel Research Fellowship stipend holders from such different disciplines as architecture, sculpture, media art and sound poetry have already taken part in the program and benefited from the exchange.

»What interests me about this project is that it really is an experimental setting, of which I am a part. That means I reflect on myself within this system. And this is a rather exciting moment for me,« says artist Sybille Neumeyer about her work on Platform 12.

»The main purpose of the joint dialog was to exchange views on how ideas are pursued with the aim of doing something completely different to what we are already doing. And then to consider how these ideas can be brought together with our approaches at a different point. This was an enormous learning experience for us,« summarizes Klaus Meyer, an expert in tribology and pumps in Corporate Sector Research and Advance Engineering at Robert Bosch GmbH.

A selection of the current artistic results as well as a detailed interview with Birgit Thoben and the Wimmelforschung artist duo, Thomas Drescher and Maren Geers, on the creation of Platform 12 can be found at the following links:

Kinga Tóth »Living Text Bodies«: <https://vimeo.com/222684550>

Isabel Zintl »Nachdenken über neue Freiräume in Stuttgart West«: <https://vimeo.com/222436049>

Ursula Achternkamp »Auswildern«: <https://vimeo.com/222203720>

Jol Thomson »Deep Time Machine Learning«: <https://vimeo.com/228557512>

Interview: <https://schloss-post.com/the-art-of-wimmelresearch/>

Platform 12 is based on the cooperation of three partners:

The **Akademie Schloss Solitude** is an international artist-in-residence program that represents a network of the global art world. Since 1990, the Academy has sponsored artists in the disciplines of architecture, the fine arts, the performing arts, design, literature, music/sound and time-based media and, since 2016, web-based media, through residential and work grants. The *art, science & business* program has been promoting dialog between science, business, art and philosophy since 2002.



The **Center for Research and Advance Engineering** at Robert Bosch GmbH is the hub of the Bosch Group's international research and development network and promotes creativity and collaboration as a forward-looking working environment. At the Research Campus in Renningen near Stuttgart, Germany, research work is being done on new technologies and innovative manufacturing processes are being developed by combining technical and scientific disciplines.

Wimmelforschung is an artistic company founded by stage designers and concept artists Maren Geers and Thomas Drescher in Berlin in 2013. They support and accompany organizations from the worlds of business and society in experimental, future-oriented processes and non-technical innovations. With their artistic work, they initiate strategies and processes that critically question established perspectives and structures and open up access to new, as yet unknown areas of opportunity.

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