

Introductory speech to the installation „Anfangshypothesen“

Deutsches Museum, Munich, June 12th, 2026

Anfangshypothesen ("Hypotheses of the Beginning") is an artistic exploration of one of humanity's most fundamental questions: **Where did life on Earth come from?**

By combining artistic and scientific approaches, the installation brings together current research, observations, scientific questions, possible answers, unproven hypotheses, and speculative ideas. It creates a space for reflection, imagination, and dialogue.

Although the installation engages closely with science, it is not a collection of scientific posters. Like many works of art, it is meant first and foremost to be experienced. At the same time, it may raise questions such as: *Is this art? What is art? What is science? What do science and art have in common? And where do they differ?*

Ultimately, this project is about questions, connections, collaboration, and processes.

The Deutsches Museum is an ideal place for this work because it brings together history, technology, science, and society. These perspectives continuously challenge and enrich one another. As a place where knowledge meets the public, the museum creates opportunities for dialogue. It is also a place where past and future intersect. For that reason, it seems especially meaningful to reflect here on a topic as fundamental as the origin and evolution of life. Understanding where we come from may help us make informed decisions about where we are going.

This installation does not provide a definitive answer to how life began. Instead, it invites us to consider how life may have emerged and evolved over billions of years. By bringing together chemistry, biology, physics, geology, astronomy, technology, and imagination, it presents scientific research, artistic practice, and speculative thinking as complementary ways of understanding the world.

The installation itself emerged through a process of observation, translation, and transformation.

Earlier this year, I visited several research groups within the CRC 392 cluster. Through conversations, presentations, and laboratory visits, I collected impressions, ideas, texts, and patterns. After comparing similarities and differences, I developed a computer program that translated these observations into an eight-part visual system.

Each panel contains one dominant element while simultaneously incorporating traces of other disciplines, reflecting my experience of moving between different research groups. I became convinced that new knowledge emerges primarily through collaboration. The installation therefore becomes a meeting point - or perhaps even a melting point - for the natural sciences, technology, and art.

You may recognize familiar structures: fractals, Fibonacci patterns, cosmic forms, or biological elements. You may also encounter forms that seem entirely unfamiliar - perhaps matter that has never been seen before and does not yet even have a name. You may read the accompanying texts and discover meaning - or find that their meaning remains uncertain. This ambiguity is intentional.

There is a theory that new knowledge emerges when we question what we already know. Likewise, a work of art should always offer more than the artist consciously intended - and above all, it should generate questions.

One observation was shared by almost every research group I visited: the impossibility of directly observing the beginning of life on Earth.

As one researcher put it:

"Unfortunately, we cannot travel through time."

This limitation makes imagination an essential part of research. Whenever evidence is incomplete, hypotheses become necessary.

Like many works of art, this installation contains both order and chaos. Your attention may be drawn to certain elements while rejecting others. That is perfectly normal.

From my perspective, four central themes shape this work.

First: Research Exchange.

No single scientific discipline can answer these fundamental questions alone. Progress depends on the exchange of knowledge and the contributions of many different fields.

Second: Imagination.

Where knowledge ends, speculation begins. The texts are intentionally open-ended. They are not explanations but invitations to continue thinking.

Third: Technology.

Technology is both subject and medium. The installation was created through generative computational processes, and its digital structure remains visible - even down to the level of individual pixels.

Fourth: Collaboration.

New ideas emerge when different perspectives meet. The installation reflects this ongoing exchange. The process may be compared to musical sampling: existing elements are recombined to create something new. Scientific knowledge is assembled from data; art transforms and recontextualizes it. Understanding emerges not through isolation but through interaction.

You may approach the installation in different ways.

You can adopt a reductionist perspective, focusing on individual details, comparing elements, and developing your own interpretations. Or you can take a holistic view, experiencing the installation as an interconnected whole.

Perhaps the most interesting approach is to move continually between these two modes of perception. In that movement, new connections, a sense of flow, or perhaps even moments of transcendence may emerge.

The installation also operates on different levels of certainty. Some elements are based on established scientific knowledge, others on plausible hypotheses, and still others on speculative possibilities. Facts and "what-if" scenarios coexist side by side.

You may think: *"I've seen something like this before."*

Or: *"Perhaps there is something to this."*

Or simply: *"This doesn't make any sense at all."*

All of these responses are valid.

If the installation encourages questions, connections, or even doubts that did not exist before in your minds, then it has achieved its goal. I would be delighted if you shared those thoughts with one another - or perhaps even with me this evening.

Historically, the Greek word *techne* referred to both art and craft. The separation between art and technology is relatively recent. This installation, itself generated through computational processes, attempts in a small way to reconnect them.

Research is not a destination but an ongoing process. Scientific knowledge is never final. It evolves continuously through new evidence, new methods, and new perspectives.

Perhaps the central message of this project is simple:

Progress depends on connections - between disciplines, ideas, and people.

Thank you for being part of this exchange.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who supported this project: Simone Göppert for her incredible support; Wolfgang Heckl and the Deutsches Museum; William Orsi, Christof Mast, Oliver Trapp, Henrike Niederholtmeyer and their teams; and Sebastian Springer, who first inspired my interest in connecting science and art, and without whom we would quite literally not be here today.

I would also like to thank Kai - the best Wellerman ever - as well as all supporters, colleagues, friends, and family. It is wonderful to have you here.

I wish you all an inspiring evening. Please enjoy the exhibition, exchange ideas, and continue the conversation.

And above all: stay curious :-)