

# ~~steirischerherbst~~

## Press Release, 14.6.21

steirischer herbst '21

*The Way Out*

9.9.–10.10.21

Various locations in Graz and Styria, Austria

steirischer herbst, a festival that has always had a strong history of engaging with public space, is venturing radically out this year—outdoors, out of lockdown, but also out of the safe institutional bubble. In a time when art is searching for a way to become essential again, the festival explores ways in which artworks can infiltrate the new adventure of the everyday, be it in chance encounters, local workshops or public gatherings.

The engagement with the local—its contexts, its stories, its people—is related to the urgency of reducing unnecessary travel, but not just that. It resonates with the strangely painful and sometimes clumsy rediscovery of the outside world after a year of lockdown life and online culture—itself an invaluable tool for providing equal access to audiences no matter who or where they are.

As meeting strangers is slowly starting to become a regular occurrence again, it is time for contemporary art to meet its own invisible and long-neglected stranger—the non-initiated audience. The avant-garde translates into a vivid, explicit, and at times contemptuous rejection of populism, often demanding radical change. However, its art frequently addresses an elite group of viewers and remains inaccessible to most audiences. Today, with the future similarly uncertain as hitherto only in postwar times, the capacity to effect radical change may well lie in the hands of previously excluded audiences from places not yet permeated by contemporary art or who turn elsewhere to find answers to political issues. Can the popular be political without slipping into a populist trap?

All works shown at the 54th edition of steirischer herbst are new commissions. Participating artists and collectives include:

Yael Bartana, Uriel Barthélémi with Sophie Bernado & Salomon Baneck-Asaro, Sophia Brous with Faye Driscoll, Samara Hersch, and Lara Thoms, Phil Collins, Lars Cuzner, Žiga Divjak, Nicholas Grafia & Mikołaj Sobczak, G.R.A.M., Nilbar Güreş, Hans Haacke, Horst Gerhard Haberl, Felix Hafner, Heimo Halbrainer, Thomas Hirschhorn, Hiwa K, Dejan Kaludjerović in collaboration with Marija Balubžić, Bojan Djordjev, and Tanja Šljivar, Flo Kasearu, Boris Mikhailov, Paul B. Preciado, Die Rabtaldirndln, Tim Radya, Reverend Billy & The Church of Stop Shopping, Stefanie Sargnagel, Tino Sehgal, Marinella Senatore, Mounira Al Solh, Hito Steyerl and Mark Waschke, Theater im Bahnhof, and Rosemarie Trockel.

The full artist list is published in September.

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### Program Overview

This year, steirischer herbst is extended for a full week and begins earlier than usual, taking place from 9 September to 10 October. The program unfolds in various locations in Graz and Styria with a first premiere scheduled in the village of Hainersdorf already in June, offering a preview of this year's themes and approaches.

### Prologue

In June and July, local performance collective **Die Rabtaldirndln** address corruption, real estate speculation, and the dubious deals men in power make behind closed doors in a prologue to this year's festival. The collective's newest piece *Betonfieber* is a *Schwank*, a popular type of theater sketch, premiering on 26 June.

### The whole city becomes a stage

On 9 September, the festival opens in public space with the presentation of a new installation by **Marinella Senatore**. During the first two weeks of steirischer herbst '21, large-scale multi-performer street interventions by **Sophia Brous** (together with **Faye Driscoll**, **Samara Hersch**, and **Lara Thoms**) and **Flo Kasearu** as well as situations by **Tino Sehgal** take place in the parks, streets, and squares of Graz. Moving bodies of city dwellers, as well as of actors and actresses, become part of the artworks, challenging the border between art and life, reality and fiction.

### Embracing the popular

Already for the fourth time, steirischer herbst director Ekaterina Degot and her team are challenging the purity of the festival's "cosmopolitan avant-garde" legacy. With *The Way Out*, the festival and its artists dive deep into contemporary popular culture, from music to television, and revive its democratic political potential. Composer and choreographer **Uriel Barthélemy** with **Sophie Bernado** and **Salomon Baneck-Asaro** explore the meld of electronic percussion and hip-hop dance in a decolonial context. **Phil Collins's** sound systems pop up in various neighborhoods of Graz with flamboyant reggae music and talks about its hidden political legacy of anti-colonial, anti-homophobic, and socialist struggle. **Hiwa K** revisits his early distance-cooking project *Cooking with Mama* with an open-air kitchen van that moves through Graz, staging participative cooking performances with relatives far away. **Reverend Billy & The Church of Stop Shopping** interrupt the routine on Graz's main shopping strip with rousing songs and televangelist sermons against consumerism and the destruction of the earth.

### Working with others

Many of the festival's projects involve intensive collaboration with social institutions and groups in Graz and Styria. A memorial to Simone Weil by **Thomas Hirschhorn**, an artist known for his years-long commitment to community projects, is based on such neighborhood outreach. **Dejan Kaludjerović** interviewed children on major issues such as war, racism, or the pandemic to develop an opera in collaboration with **Marija Balubžić, Bojan Djordjev, and Tanja Šljivar**. Theater director **Felix Hafner** holds workshops in the Styrian towns of Weiz, Deutschlandsberg, and Maria Lankowitz to create performances with locals rather than actors, exploring the participants's motivations for protest and public political engagement across generational divides.

### Up close and from afar

In today's situation involving drastic sanitary measures as well as uncertainty regarding travel, steirischer herbst wants to make its productions accessible to those who cannot, or prefer not to, visit them under current conditions. Three major stage productions by **Hito Steyerl** and **Mark Waschke, Žiga Divjak** (a coproduction with Mladinsko Theatre in Ljubljana), and **Yael Bartana** premiere in Graz's Orpheum during the festival. These pieces are also streamed and delve into major challenges of our times such as digital feudalism and popular revolt, the raise of occultism and toxic nationalism, or the climate crisis.

Taking the spirit of last year's *Paranoia TV* to the streets of Graz, steirischer herbst '21 also features its own online TV series called *Situation Reports*, available at [www.steirischerherbst.at](http://www.steirischerherbst.at) through the whole festival period. Humorous and serious at once, it reveals the city to the world and the festival to the city. The reports are created by artists and intellectuals, some of them foreign correspondents, others well-informed Graz insiders, including **Lars Cuzner, Stefanie Sargnagel, Nicholas Grafia & Miłkołaj Sobczak**, and **Heimo Halbrainer**.

### Poster campaign

A special poster campaign addressing the reopening of public space fills Graz with contributions by **Mounira Al Solh, Nilbar Güreş, Boris Mikhailov, Rosemarie Trockel** as well as advertisement icon and former festival director **Horst Gerhard Haberl** and legendary steirischer herbst veteran **Hans Haacke**, among others.

### Finissage

The festival closes with a two-day flea market full of narrative interventions by **Theater im Bahnhof**, culminating in a parodistic TV Gala, *Bares für Wahres* (Cash for Truth), on 10 October.

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### Discursive Program

This year's "Ideas" discursive program probes the common impasses of a postpandemic reality and looks for ways of getting beyond them. It kicks off with a lecture by **Paul B. Preciado** and continues with a series of online keynotes entitled *The Way Out Of...* with thinkers and writers. A conference organized in collaboration with **Forum Stadtpark** on the topic of transformation dives into today's debates around war communism, economic planning, mobility, and labor in an age of crisis and rapid historical change.

### Festivals within the festival

steirischer herbst continues with the second iteration of **Out of Joint**, the literary festival within steirischer herbst conceived together with **Literaturhaus Graz**. Taking place from 4 to 8 October, it features new text commissions by **Doron Rabinovici**, **Günter Eichberger**, and **Stephan Roiss**. From 7 to 10 October, steirischer herbst's longest-running festival within the festival, **musikprotokoll**, explores contemporary and experimental music in concerts and sound installations playing with the theme of *nomadic sounds*. From 12 August to 18 September, the cultural initiative **STUBENrein** examines *New Horizons* in the Styrian district of Murau, using last year's involuntary change of perspective to rethink cultural work in the sociopolitical fabric of a rural region.

### Parallel Program

As in previous years, steirischer herbst '21 also features a rich and varied Parallel Program hosted by local cultural institutions and partners, including **accomplices – Verein zur Erkundung multimedialer Ausdrucksformen**, **Annenstraße 53**, **BRUSEUM / Neue Galerie Graz**, **esc medien kunst labor**, **Follow the Rabbit**, **Forum Stadtpark**, **Grazer Kunstverein**, **HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark**, **HDA – Haus der Architektur**, **KULTUM. Zentrum für Gegenwart, Kunst und Religion in Graz**, **Dejan Markovic**, **Das Planetenparty Prinzip**, **Schaumbad – Freies Atelierhaus Graz**, **Spiel des Lebens Murau / Karin Reinprecht und Marcus Neustetter**, and **Theater am Lend** together with **uniT**.

This edition of steirischer herbst is created by all participating artists, partners, thinkers, and philosophers, as well as **Ekaterina Degot**, Director and Chief Curator, **Henriette Gallus**, Deputy Director, **Christoph Platz**, Head of Curatorial Affairs, **David Riff**, Senior Curator, **Dominik Müller**, Curator, **Mirela Baciak**, Curator, and steirischer herbst team.

The full program schedule is published on 1 September.

For images, please visit [www.steirischerherbst.at/press](http://www.steirischerherbst.at/press).

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### **About steirischer herbst**

Every autumn since its founding in 1968, steirischer herbst has provided a platform for new productions, provoking and shaping public debates in a variety of forms across disciplines and media. Reinventing itself many times over, the festival has always redefined the terms of the conversation about what culture might mean in a changing contemporaneity, as seen in Graz, Austria's second most populous city.

If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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