

Press Release

10 September 2019

**steirischer herbst '19**  
**Opening Days program 19–22 September**

steirischer herbst '19

19.9.–13.10.19

Various locations in Graz and Styria, Austria

Opening Days: 19.9.–22.9.19

Opening: 19.9., 17:00, Landhaushof

On 19 September, steirischer herbst '19 opens its doors to the public in Graz and Styria. Titled *Grand Hotel Abyss*, a striking metaphor used by philosopher Georg Lukács, the festival presents a far-reaching meditation on hedonism in troubled times.

It is the second instalment curated by Ekaterina Degot and her festival team. The various artistic contributions form a bigger, comprehensive narrative which takes the form of an extended overall exhibition spread over roughly thirty venues in Graz and Styria. Some of its elements are installations, others performances, and, still others, discursive events or panel discussions, all specific to the larger parcours in time and space. *Grand Hotel Abyss* features artistic contributions by more than forty artists/artist collectives.

The newly published Guidebook, including a map of the festival, guides you through the curatorial narrative of the *Grand Hotel Abyss* program. It also presents musikprotokoll and STUBENrein, two festivals within the larger festival, along with the wide range of exhibitions and events that make up the Parallel Program of various cultural institutions in Graz and Styria. For 29 Euro (reduced price 23 Euro), the Festival Pass gives admission to all events and installations of *Grand Hotel Abyss* and reduced admission to the events of the Parallel Program.

On the opening day, 19 September at 17:00, the festival kicks off with a speech by Director and Chief Curator **Ekaterina Degot** at Landhaushof, followed by political oration by **Zorka Wollny**. At 19:00, the evening continues at Congress Graz with the *Opening Extravaganza*, featuring an immersive installation by **Cibelle Cavalli Bastos**, presented alongside *tableaux vivants* by Vienna-based artists **Jakob Lena Knebl and Markus Pires Mata**. The *Extravaganza* program at Congress Graz unfolds with several surprise interventions by **Jule Flierl, Manuel Pelmuş, Das**

**Planetenparty Prinzip**, and **Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz**, while the artistic duo **Elmgreen & Dragset** make an ironic contribution to Austria's confectionary landscape. The evening culminates with a lecture performance by **Gernot Wieland** (21:00) followed by a playfully apocalyptic show by the flamboyant Icelandic duo **Erna Ómarsdóttir & Valdimar Jóhannsson**. A concert by **Fatima Spar & The Freedom Fries** completes the evening.

Friday, 20 September opens with a performance at Schloßbergplatz conceived by **Riccardo Giacconi** (repeated performances between 10:00–12:00), vaguely resembling the work of young newspaper vendors crying out daily headlines. **Jule Flierl** reinterprets a 1972 propaganda poem by Werner Kunz at Kunsthaus Graz (14:00). In the evening, at 19:00, Georgian director **Guram Matskhonashvili** stages the newest piece by author and philosopher **Keti Chukhrov**, a biting satire of the faux internationalism of cultural theory today: *The Global Congress of Post-Prostitution*.

On 21 September, **Theater im Bahnhof** from Graz invites the audience to Bauernmarkt Eggenberg to join actors in a game that entails trying to escape the vicious circle of poverty (repeated performances between 09:00 and 13:00). For his adaption of Nâzım Hikmet's second book, *Human Landscapes*, **Michiel Vandevelde** builds on his participation in steirischer herbst '18, this time focusing on the luxuries of the elite. Vandevelde's performance takes place at 19:00 at Großer Minoritensaal.

Installation projects at various locations transcend many historical contexts, unveiling buried conflicts. An installative work in Palais Attems comments on the grandiose decay of Counter Reformation aesthetics with contributions by **Oscar Murillo** and **Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze**, among others. An installation in Graz's Künstlerhaus includes new films by **Jasmina Cibic** and **Jeremy Deller**, as well as works by the late British maverick **Ian Hamilton Finlay**. Artist **Nedko Solakov** returns to the Cold War and its spy stories with interventions in various local hotel lobbies.

At Grazer Kunstverein, **Riccardo Giacconi** looks at the abysmal "option" between fascism and fascism in 1940s Southern Tyrol. A curatorial fantasy on the life and times of Georg Lukács is on view at Graz's Literaturhaus, examining Thomas Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain*, a theme it shares with a filmic installation by **Daniel Mann and Eitan Efrat** at Forum Stadtpark. **Artur Żmijewski** is looking for a place to hide from current political disaster in his own country as well as in others. **Michael Portnoy** deploys tongue-in-cheek optimism to show us the rather bizarre future of sex in his new monumental video work at Helmut List Halle.

*Grand Hotel Abyss* also features installations and performances in public spaces. In the municipality of Puch bei Weiz, **Jaśmina Wójcik**'s tower of empty apple crates pays tribute to seasonal workers from Hungary, Poland, and Romania (Opening 15.9., 15:00). At Griesplatz in Graz, **Andreas Siekmann** presents his version of Albrecht Dürer's never-realized victory column *Monument to the Vanquished Peasants*.

*Counterpositions*, developed with publishing house CLIO and the Institute for Art in Public Space Styria, is a cluster of performative as well as installative interventions around political monuments. On 21 September at 10:45, *Counterpositions*' **Eduard Freudmann** unveils an installation at the Befreiungsdenkmal in the Burggarten of Grazer Burg. Fellow *Counterpositions* members **Elizabeth Ward** and **Thomas Geiger** contribute performative interventions at the Jahn-Denkmal in Stadtpark (10:00, 21.9.) and the Dr. Hans-Kloepfer-Büste on Schloßberg near Türkenbrunnen (11:00, 22.9.), respectively.

The acclaimed sociologist and theorist of today's emotional capitalism, **Eva Illouz**, kicks off the festival's *Ideas* section with a keynote about her forthcoming work on happiness (Orpheum Extra 20.9., 16:00). Artist talks and tours by the **Office of Open Questions** round off the program for the opening weekend. The festival's herbstkantine (Kaiser-Josef-Platz 4, 8010 Graz) opens on Friday 20 September with a vocal intervention by **Keti Chukhrov** (22:00) and hosts *An Evening of Political Toasts* on Saturday 21 September (22:00).

The core program of *Grand Hotel Abyss* is accompanied by a rich and varied **Parallel Program**, hosted by local cultural institutions. Several of these will present openings of their own during the Opening Days of steirischer herbst. These include BRUSEUM / Neue Galerie, esc medien kunst labor, Haus der Architektur, kunstraum\_8020, < rotor > Zentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst, Schaumbad – Freies Atelierhaus Graz and the smallest gallery – place for photography.

The complete program of steirischer herbst '19 and the **Vorherbst Magazine** are available at [www.steirischerherbst.at](http://www.steirischerherbst.at).

**The *Grand Hotel Abyss* parcours includes works by:**

Ariel Efraim Ashbel and friends, Cibelle Cavalli Bastos, Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz, Keti Chukhrov / Guram Matskhonashvili, Jasmina Cibic, *Counterpositions* (Eduard Freudmann, Thomas Geiger, and Elizabeth Ward), Das Planetenparty Prinzip, Jeremy Deller, Bojan Djordjev / Goran Ferčec, Elmgreen & Dragset, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Jule Flierl, Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze, Riccardo Giacconi, Grupa Ee, Jakob Lena Knebl and Markus Pires Mata, *The Life and Adventures of GL*, Daniel Mann and Eitan Efrat, Oscar Murillo, Erna Ómarsdóttir & Valdimar

Jóhannsson, Boris Ondreička, Manuel Pelmuş, Michael Portnoy, Blanka Rádóczy / Vladimir Sorokin, Hanna Rohn, Andreas Siekmann, Nedko Solakov, Andrei Stadnikov with Vanya Bowden, Shifra Kazhdan and Dmitry Vlasik, Theater im Bahnhof, Michiel Vandevelde, Gernot Wieland, Jaśmina Wójcik, Zorka Wollny, and Artur Żmijewski

Press images as well as further information can be found in the press section at [www.steirischerherbst.at](http://www.steirischerherbst.at). Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

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Visitor- and Presscenter  
Kaiser-Josef-Platz 4  
8010 Graz  
11.9.-13.10., 9:00-18:00 (Closed on 30.9. and 7.10.)

## **About steirischer herbst**

Director and Chief Curator: Ekaterina Degot

Concept: Ekaterina Degot and David Riff

Curatorial Team: Mirela Baciak, Ekaterina Degot, Henriette Gallus, Dominik Müller, Christoph Platz, and David Riff

Every autumn since its founding half a century ago in 1968, the festival has provided a platform for new artistic productions, provoking and shaping public debates in a variety of forms across disciplines and media. Reinventing itself many times over, steirischer herbst 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, and the surrounding region of Styria.