

Press Release, 11.10.19

steirischer herbst '19—Résumé

steirischer herbst is a place of artistic freedom and experimentation that gives artists the space to open up new directions and paths. Artistic productions do not follow the performance principle but are always motivated by content. This year, as before, steirischer herbst consistently and uncompromisingly pursued the task of enabling **new and specially commissioned art productions, strengthening international networks, and bringing new artists** to Graz and Styria.

The *Grand Hotel Abyss* opens its doors to the public for the last time on Sunday, 13 October. The metaphor of the hotel on the brink of the abyss, coined by the philosopher Georg Lukács in the 1930s, served steirischer herbst this year as the starting point for a comprehensive examination of hedonism in turbulent times. For three and a half weeks, this hotel was illuminated and discussed from many different angles as part of the festival's core program, in installations, performances, interventions, lectures, and discussions.

During steirischer herbst '19, around **43,000 visits to the *Grand Hotel Abyss* parcours, musikprotokoll, and STUBENrein festival, as well as the Parallel Program, were counted** (as of 10.10., 21:00). The Festival Pass, which was introduced last year, continues to be very well received. Please note, that we will present the final numbers of visits for steirischer herbst '19 after the parcours installations at Grazer Kunstverein und Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst und Medien have closed, in the end of November.

**Thirty-five commissioned productions by more than forty artists and artist collectives** formed a densely woven narrative, which extended in the form of an overall exhibition to **around thirty locations in Graz and Styria**. Renderings in public space—from the installative to the performative—were to be found on the Schloßberg in Graz and in the Burggarten, but also in less exposed places such as Griesplatz or even in an apple orchard in Puch bei Weiz.

The **Open Call**, which was launched at the end of last year and aimed at cultural institutions and artists throughout Styria, resulted in a series of new collaborations and partnerships that were included in both the festival's core program and the Parallel Program. **herbstkantine** on Kaiser-Josef-Platz became a pulsing meeting point of steirischer herbst '19.

#### Visitor survey

During the festival weeks steirischer herbst, like last year, conducted a visitor survey in cooperation with the CAMPUS O2—University of Applied Sciences (Prof. Dr. Astrid Oberzaucher) in Graz. In the survey, the festival's structure, program, and visitor service were evaluated by visitors based on a questionnaire. **80 percent of the festival's visitors came from Austria, followed by guests from Germany, Slovenia, Bulgaria,**

**the US, the UK, and Hungary.** 74 percent of visitors to steirischer herbst were under 50, with the **largest visitor group consisting of people up to 35 years of age.** While 54 percent of those surveyed were regular visitors, 46 percent stated that they either visited the festival for the first time or did so quite irregularly in the past. It is particularly pleasing that **96,4 percent said that they would visit steirischer herbst again,** representing an increase of 3,4 percent from the previous year. The interviewees gave the visitor service and the Festival Pass the top marks, followed by good ratings for projects in public spaces.

### **The Office of Open Questions**

There was great demand this year for the services of the Office of Open Questions. Under this name, the festival's education team invited visitors, as it did last year, to experience and discuss the festival's diverse program with a focus on open questions. **Discussions took place not only in Graz but also in cinemas and schools throughout Styria and at the STUBENrein festival in Murau.** The highlight of the educational activities, a few days ago, was the arrival of 400 students from the HTBLVA Graz-Ortweinschule, who were invited to take a look behind the scenes at the festival. A school conference about the festival as a workplace titled *Die Kunst ist meine Baustelle—von der Idee bis zur Ausführung* (Art is my Construction Site—From Idea to Realization) was held, and included workshops from various departments of the festival as well as tours and film screenings. In 2019, the Office of Open Questions recorded an **increase of 39 percent in guided tour formats, workshops, and other events** compared with the previous year.

### **International Echo**

Around **450 national and international media representatives and professionals from around 26 countries** were accredited for steirischer herbst '19. After the great media attention garnered by last year's festival, we are happy to announce that many renowned media came to Graz again to report on the festival, among them *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia), *Deutschlandfunk* and *Der Freitag* (Germany), *Artforum* (USA), *ArtReview* (UK), *RTVE* (Spain and South America), *Art Monthly* (UK), *art-agenda* (US), *RTVSLO* (Slovenia), and *Athinorama* (Greece). Among the newly accredited were representatives of *The Wall Street Journal* (US), *taz* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany), *Paletten* (Sweden), *SZUM* and *Vogue* (Poland), *Financial Times* (China), *HART* (Belgium), *Mousse* (Italy), and *Russian Art Focus* (Russia). Interviews with the festival director appeared in *Artribune* (Italy), *Delo* (Slovenia), *Flaunt Magazine* (US), *Georgia Today* (Georgia), *Monopol* and *Die Zeit* (Germany), to name a few.

### **Preview**

What began as a large and freely accessible festival prelude in the Landhaushof with a speech by the Director and Chief Curator of steirischer herbst, Ekaterina Degot, and a subsequent *Opening Extravaganza* ends this Sunday with a concluding discursive highlight: the culinary and aesthetic feel-good zone of southern Styria, including its ideological abysses, will be the theme of the ***Finissage of the Grand Hotel Abyss.*** Daniela Ebenbauer, Alois Gross, Kurt Jungwirth, Marko Radmilović, Sarah Wiener, and

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Michael Zinganel will come together for the talk *The Dialectics of Pleasure and Ideology* at the Schlossberghotel. They will discuss the legacy of the *Weinstraße* (Wine Route), the rolling hills that were a favorite destination of Styrian Nazi functionaries, recently visited by Vladimir Putin.

Prior to the *Finissage*, the *Grand Hotel Abyss* parcours still has many new things to discover. **Artur Żmijewski's installation *Plan B*, for example, has been supplemented by a video work** created only in recent weeks that shows life in an end-time parallel world that the Polish artist set up in business premises on Girardigasse. This evening, a **premiere of the Russian theater director Andrei Stadnikov's play *Chow Down!* takes place in the Maria Verkündigungskirche** in Graz Kroisbach, a utopian-looking church building from the early 1970s. The sanctions Russia recently imposed on food imports from the EU, followed by the destruction of thousands of tons of food, are investigated by Stadnikov starting with a large feast. **Blanka Rádóczy's production of Vladimir Sorokin's *Manaraga—Diary of a Master Chef***, a collaboration of Schauspielhaus Graz and steirischer herbst '19, is on show at Museum für Geschichte.

Numerous **projects of the Parallel Program, as well as of the core program, will continue after the official end of the festival**, including Riccardo Giacconi's installation *Options* at the Grazer Kunstverein and a show featuring works by Jeremy Deller, Jasmina Cibic, and Ian Hamilton Finlay at the Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst und Medien.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that steirischer herbst and Grupa Ee have been awarded: yesterday evening, we received the silver ***Kunststück* award for the visual appearance of steirischer herbst '18** at the **Out of Home Kulturawards** of Gewista company Kulturformat in Vienna.

**steirischer herbst '20** will take place from **24 September to 18 October**.

Press photos can be found in the press section of our website. If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

Yours sincerely,

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