

Press Release, 17.6.20

steirischer herbst '20: Paranoia TV  
24.9.–18.10.20

steirischer herbst is excited to share the curatorial concept for its 53rd edition and present the artists who are contributing to an experimental reimagining of the festival. In keeping with its history of avant-gardism, steirischer herbst reinvents itself in a new form that actively responds to the current atmosphere of angst and uncertainty.

As we approach the halfway point of a year that has been anything but “normal,” sanity seems to be slowly returning to some parts of Europe. Art is even allowed back into people’s lives. In Austria, for instance, galleries opened at the same time as gardening stores, with museums quick to follow (albeit with baby steps and guide-tape on the floor). Theater lovers are also able to cautiously enjoy performances again, their seats separated by distances equivalent to the size of a small elephant.

Still, many people are scared, paranoid even. Fear of a second wave is fostering an aversion to public spaces, filled with the breath of potentially contagious strangers. On a more fundamental level, we begin to fear that we ourselves might be asymptotically spreading the deadly virus. Such fears will not disappear any time soon. Imagining that life might never return to normal is hard enough on its own, but to look back on this normalcy from our current post-lockdown perspective is nothing short of horrifying. Clearly, the virus is not to blame for xenophobia, racism masked as a hygienic norm, ubiquitous surveillance, or radical inequality. These phenomena were all part of what was considered “normal.” It is this “normal” that brought us the virus. It is this “normal” that we ought to fear.

Rather than suppressing this fear, steirischer herbst engages with it head on by reinventing itself as a media consortium called *Paranoia TV*: a platform for the uncanny and the unsettling, broadcasting from a dystopian parallel universe, where there is no such thing as reassurance. Social distancing practices are still in place, football games and parties are prohibited, and even the produce in the supermarket has ears. Art is home-delivered, artists have to work from their kitchens, the private sphere has become even more political, and the only way to explore public spaces is by sleepwalking alone. White cubes, expensive shipments, global jet-set travels: might it be that they will not be missed?

## *Paranoia TV* is everywhere

From 24 September to 18 October, *Paranoia TV* airs on a variety of platforms, vehemently fighting off the “normal formats,” and diving headlong into the uncanny valley of lockdown nostalgia. All of this kicks off with a speech by Director and Chief Curator Ekaterina Degot during a **live opening** on 24 September in the center of Graz, where the politics of entertainment are lauded and physical proximity gets the boot.

*Paranoia TV* hijacks the steirischer herbst website, where it presents artist-made talk shows and television series, among other things, as well as live conversations and discussions. Some televised events might spread into physical interventions in the streets of Graz and surrounding Styria, while real-life occurrences and performative actions on those same streets might find their way into live broadcasting and news coverage.

Even your phone is not safe from *Paranoia TV*'s omnipresence: a **specially conceived mobile app** is available for download free of charge shortly before the start of the festival. The app keeps you up-to-date on the program schedule, sends alerts on breaking news and last-minute developments, and allows you to tune in to the world of *Paranoia TV* on demand and at any given moment.

## Art production in uncertain times

*Paranoia TV* is a critical and artistic response to the global pandemic and the complications it has introduced, not only to our everyday lives, but also with regards to producing large-scale art events and exhibitions—in Graz and in the rest of the world. As the third iteration of steirischer herbst under Ekaterina Degot and her curatorial team, this experimental TV-format will allow the festival to continue featuring **entirely new commissions** in forms independent from lockdown measures and restrictions. Specially conceived contributions by roughly **forty artists** will directly or indirectly address the urgencies and grievances of our time: the new vulnerabilities of gender and age, the comedies and dramas of domesticity, the sudden obsession with classical opera, the choreography of restricted movement, class, money, hugs, the biopolitics of contagion, the self-isolation of white men in sterile autonomy zones, and the hopes for the unexpected future.

A first glimpse into the world of *Paranoia TV* can be found on [www.paranoia-tv.com](http://www.paranoia-tv.com), where a virtual avatar of Sigmund Freud, brought back to life by the latest deepfake technologies, explains what the viewer can expect of this new platform. Considered to be the father of psychoanalysis, Freud was one of the first scholars to write about paranoia and related concepts, though reality proved more radical than his theories in many cases.

**Artists and collectives contributing to Paranoia TV**

Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Akinbode Akinbiyi, Jérôme Bel, Neïl Beloufa, Christian von Borries, Sergey Bratkov, Alexander Chernyshkov, Pauline Curnier Jardin, Josef Dabernig, Nika Dubrovsky & David Graeber, Vadim Fishkin, Dani Gal, Thomas Geiger, Gelitin, Tamar Guimarães in collaboration with Luisa Cavanagh and Rusi Millán Pastori, Rana Hamadeh, Janez Janša, Lina Majdalanie & Rabih Mroué, Michikazu Matsune, Ingo Niermann, Lulu Obermayer, Ahmet Ögüt, Diederik Peeters, Joanna Piotrowska, Alexandra Pirici & Jonas Lund, Hendrik Quast & Maika Knoblich, Judy Radul, Joanna Rajkowska and Robert Yerachmiel Sniderman, Roee Rosen, Susanne Sachsse / Marc Siegel / Xiu Xiu (Jamie Stewart), Igor Samolet, Liv Schulman, John Smith, studio ASYNCHROME, Sung Tieu, Theater im Bahnhof, Clemens von Wedemeyer, and Anna Witt

With conversations convened by Herwig G. Höller, Srećko Horvat, Adam Kleinman, Milo Rau, and Hito Steyerl, amongst others

*Paranoia TV* Design: Grupa Ee

Curatorial group: Mirela Baciak, Ekaterina Degot (Director and Chief Curator), Henriette Gallus, Dominik Müller, Christoph Platz, David Riff

## Partnerships, collaborations, and accompaniments

In quest of new formats and ways of distribution, *Paranoia TV* and national public broadcaster Ö1—Europe’s most successful cultural radio program—are collaborating on an unprecedented scale to ensure that *Paranoia TV* can reach audiences in Austria and beyond. For the complete festival period, the various editorial teams of Ö1 are going to investigate the projects and programs of *Paranoia TV*, sending out numerous reports in differing forms (radio, online and podcast). Selected videos and audio works by participating artists are presented on a specially created online platform on Ö1’s website, thereby bringing the artistic contributions of *Paranoia TV* to an audience of roughly 700,000 daily listeners. Program schedules will be released by the end of August. Supported by Ö1 and ORF Steiermark, **musikprotokoll**, Austria’s festival-within-a-festival dedicated to contemporary and experimental music, completes this year’s edition of steirischer herbst, as it has done since the festival’s inception. A first program preview of this year’s musikprotokoll, titled *Hidden Sounds*, will be made available towards the end of June. The complete program is presented during the musikprotokoll press conference in October.

The necessity for utopian thinking after the pandemic is the subject of a special conference hosted by Graz’s legendary activist institution **Forum Stadtpark**. Titled *Es könnte anders sein – Konferenz für Praktische Kritik – Utopie (It could be different – Conference for Practical Criticism – Utopia)*, the conference features participants such as **Silvia Federici** and **Alexander Neupert-Doppler**, among others, who investigate the perspective for concrete and radical change today, examining the notion of “utopia” itself. They ask whether the emergence of new commons, radical redefinition of animal-human relations, or a world without racism are really that hard to imagine. The conference culminates in a visual assembly, facilitated by **David Graeber** and **Nika Dubrovsky**.

Together, **Literaturhaus Graz** and steirischer herbst stage *Out of Joint – Das Literaturfestival im steirischen herbst*, taking place both at Literaturhaus Graz and online on [www.paranoia-tv.com](http://www.paranoia-tv.com). This is the first out of three literature festivals that the two institutions are co-hosting in the period 2020–22. This collaboration brings back to mind the rich literary tradition of the festival and continues the vivid dialogue that started between Literaturhaus Graz and steirischer herbst since the new directorship in 2018. Participants include **Jonathan Coe**, **Lisz Hirn**, **Konrad Paul Liessmann**, **Robert Pfaller**, **Kathrin Röggl**, **Michael Reisecker**, **Judith Schalansky**, **Tomer Gardi**, and **Clemens J. Setz**, among others. Program details will be announced in August.

Traditionally, the festival is accompanied by a rich and varied **Parallel Program**, hosted by local cultural institutions, and this year is no exception. These institutions include **BRUSEUM/Neue Galerie Graz**, **Institut für Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Steiermark** with **Catrin Bolt**, **Das Planetenparty Prinzip**, **esc medien kunst labor**, **Forum Stadtpark**, **Grazer Kunstverein**, **Grätzelinitiative Margaretenbad**, **Kunsthaus Graz**, **kunstraum\_8020**, **Künstlerhaus**, **Halle für Kunst & Medien**, **monochrome**, **prenninger gespräche**, **< rotor > center for contemporary art**, **Schaumbad–Freies Atelierhaus Graz**, **QL-Galerie Graz**, and **Theater am Lend** with **uniT**.

For the second year in a row, steirischer herbst also features the broad program of the Styrian initiative **STUBENrein** as a festival inside the festival.

Special partners: **Ö1/ORF Steiermark**, **Forum Stadtpark**, **Literaturhaus Graz**, **Oper Graz**

steirischer herbst would like to sincerely thank its shareholders, project funders and sponsors, who – especially during the last couple of months – were an invaluable source of support. Special thanks go to: **Land Steiermark**, **Stadt Graz**, **Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlichen Dienst und Sport**, **Graz Tourismus**, **legero united – the shoemakers** | Initiator of **con-tempus.eu**, **Helmut Marko Hotels und Holding Graz – Kommunale Dienstleistungen GmbH**.

The full program schedule will be published on [www.paranoia-tv.com](http://www.paranoia-tv.com) at the end of August.

Image material and further information for press purposes can be found in the press section of [www.steirischerherbst.at/press](http://www.steirischerherbst.at/press).

## **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.

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