

## Clara Ianni Receives Werner Fenz Grant for Art in Public Space

For the first time, steirischer herbst and the City of Graz are jointly awarding the Werner Fenz Grant for Art in Public Space. Out of 142 submissions, renowned Brazilian artist **Clara Ianni** convinced the jury with her proposal for a performance in Graz's urban space. The grant, endowed with **17,000 euros**, covers the work's production during steirischer herbst '24.

On the initiative of over two hundred artists, curators, journalists, and other members of the art world, the City of Graz's culture department established a grant for art in public space in 2020 to honor art historian and curator **Werner Fenz** (1944–2016). In 2021, it was awarded for the first time to **Hannes Zebedin** for his project *Die Brücke* (The Bridge), produced in 2022 as part of steirischer herbst's Parallel Program.

Werner Fenz was closely associated with steirischer herbst and curated countless projects at the festival. In light of its resources and extensive production experience with art in public space, it was logical to advertise the biennial grant jointly with the city and to fully integrate the production of the winning project into steirischer herbst. The grant is aimed at national and international projects that deal with the sociopolitical context of Graz and promotes art that provides decisive impulses for public space as well as social change.

Following these criteria, the jury unanimously voted in favor of Clara Ianni's project titled *Resurrection*. Its statement reads:

*Resurrection questions the relationship between capitalism and religion in view of society's all-encompassing exhaustion and the potential for regeneration. In doing so, the artist strikes a chord with the times.*

*The jury is convinced that the multilayered project will visually seduce the audience in Graz and especially appreciates how it embeds the cultural-historical question of the relationship between humans, animals, and the environment into a local context. The project meets Werner Fenz's demand that art "claim a social responsibility for itself" and offers alternatives in the use of public space and its design.*

The five-member jury consisted of art historian and curator **Nils van Beek**, journalist and artist **Martin Behr**, steirischer herbst director and chief curator **Ekaterina Degot**, **Katrina Petter**, director of Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Niederösterreich, and artist **Andreas Siekmann**.

**Günter Riegler**, city councilor for culture, on the grant and this year's winning project:

*With this grant, the City of Graz expresses its appreciation and recognition of the work of Werner Fenz. It is intended to support art projects in public space. Clara Ianni's visionary project Resurrection reflects the spirit of Werner Fenz, who saw art as a key driver of social change.*

Born in São Paulo in 1987, grantee **Clara Ianni** is delighted at the opportunity to produce her work and explains:

*In the current context of political calamity, economic breakdown, and ecological collapse, Resurrection seeks to imagine how to live after exhaustion, after the end, how to regenerate, to resurrect oneself. Connecting environmental and human dimensions, the project bridges the exploitation of labor and nature in the context of late capitalism to expand our notion of the commons and foster our imagination of another future.*

In her work, Clara Ianni critically examines dominant historical narratives, power structures, and institutional frames, including those of the artworld. With her Werner Fenz Grant project, Ianni renders usually forgotten objects visible in public again. Her performance revives discarded backdrops and props from Graz's theaters: trees, stones, clouds, or flowers—scenic elements that represent nature. Thus, real nature is juxtaposed with artificial nature to reveal surprising connections between human and ecological aspects.

### **steirischer herbst Initiates Collection for the Werner Fenz Grant**

steirischer herbst is initiating the **collection of the Werner Fenz Grant at steirischer herbst** and has purchased originals from ten selected artists who applied for the 2024 Werner Fenz Grant for Art in Public Space. The new collection will grow in parallel with the biennial grant and include preparatory material such as drafts or sketches included in the proposals. It allows for examining different creative processes and unrealized artistic ideas while stimulating reflection on the possibilities of art in public space in Graz and beyond.

For the first acquisitions, **Tom Bogaert** (Belgium/Hungary), **Chang Gao** (China/Germany/United Kingdom), **Matthias Dämpfle** (Germany), **Danube Transformation Agency for Agency** (United Kingdom), **Department für öffentliche Erscheinungen** (Germany), **Lodewijk Heylen** (Belgium), **Christina Köhler** (Germany), **Bernadette Laimbauer** (Austria), **Marc O'Callaghan Selva** (Spain), and **Lisa Premke** (Germany) were chosen. Their projects represent a cross section of the artistic work that corresponds to the new collection's goal and is paradigmatic of Werner Fenz's understanding of art in public space.

Preparatory material for Clara Ianni's project is also part of this first contribution to the collection, which will be presented to the public in a separate **exhibition** at steirischer herbst '24. It opens on the festival's second weekend at Forum Stadtpark. Numerous documents, interviews, and photos related to Fenz's project **Kunst Heimat Kunst** will, in addition to the ten selected works, shed light on the multidimensionality of his contribution as a cultural worker, historian, and curator.

steirischer herbst director and chief curator **Ekaterina Degot** on the decision to complement the Werner Fenz Grant with a collection:

*By initiating new projects of contemporary art, steirischer herbst is writing future art history. For us, it is a natural step to start collecting the best proposals submitted to the Werner Fenz Grant for Art in Public Space. Even though not every project can be realized, a growing collection of artistic originals will be accessible in our archives and will live in the public perception as a testimony to creativity and conceptual thinking.*

### Ulrike Fenz-Kortschak: Donation to steirischer herbst Archive

Ulrike Fenz-Kortschak, Werner Fenz's widow, has generously agreed to donate parts of her private archive on her husband's work at steirischer herbst to the festival. This includes, in particular, material relating to the projects **Bezugspunkte 38/88** (1988) and **Kunst Heimat Kunst** (1992–94), which rank among the most iconic in the festival's history. Notably Hans Haacke's sculpture *Und ihr habt doch gesiegt* (1988), which was installed at Am Eisernen Tor and set on fire by neo-Nazis, is to this day known across the world. Correspondence, sketches, and photos in the steirischer herbst Archive and Research Center will provide researchers with important insights into this and other festival works.

Ulrike Fenz-Kortschak is pleased to entrust her collection to the archival experience and expertise of steirischer herbst:

*The two projects Bezugspunkte 38/88 and Kunst Heimat Kunst were early milestones not only for Werner Fenz, but also for the national and international development of art in public space and contextual artistic work. I am very happy that steirischer herbst is now taking care of the projects' documents in its archive. This means that they will not only be preserved for the future, but will also be accessible to curators, art historians, and all interested parties.*

Images: [www.steirischerherbst.at/press](http://www.steirischerherbst.at/press)

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

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