

Press Release, 21.3.18

steirischer herbst Announces its new Team and the 2018 Curatorial Concept:
Volksfronten

steirischer herbst 2018: *Volksfronten*
September 20–October 14, 2018
Opening Days: September 20–23, 2018
Various venues in Graz, Austria
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steirischer herbst, an interdisciplinary contemporary arts festival with a long-term tradition of reinventing itself with each new director, announces its new team and the curatorial concept for its 51st edition: *Volksfronten* (Popular Fronts).

Ekaterina Degot, a Russian-born visual arts curator known for her strongly contextual, anti-formalist approach and interest in contemporary art in relation to politics, literature, and history, began her five-year tenure as Director and Chief Curator in January 2018. In its new iteration, steirischer herbst presents itself as one overarching exhibition that includes performative, discursive, and cinematic elements together with installations. It turns towards intense political and aesthetic debates and invests in a dedicated site-specific approach, where each venue is chosen according to its history and the context it represents.

steirischer herbst intensifies its focus on Central and Eastern Europe, examining the complex internal dynamic between the countries commonly associated with this term as well as its relations with the rest of the world. The region reveals a global microcosm, where metropolis and periphery clash and form unruly and at times paradoxical connections. One of these “microglobalist” contexts has been the so-called Trigon, the zone of former Austrian colonial interests in Italy and Slovenia, reinterpreted in the 1960s as a purely artistic context in the Trigon biennial, itself once a part of steirischer herbst. Situating the festival in this geographical nexus and its histories thus reemerges as a central interest of steirischer herbst today.

steirischer herbst’s 51st edition is a prologue that introduces some of the themes and principles that will be relevant over the coming five years. The title *Volksfronten*—consciously used in the somewhat unconventional plural form—resonates with very different historical contexts: the antifascist solidarity of the 1930s, the left-wing platform of some of the postwar European countries, as well as an ultra-right wing nationalist group in the US. It is deliberately ambivalent. It

addresses current ideological battles that seem to challenge the old dichotomies of right/left, archaic/progressive, nationalist/cosmopolitan, and diffuse the good, old antifascist Popular Front into a scattered, fragmented “human landscape,” as the visionary Turkish dissident writer Nazim Hikmet put it. Political wars are being interpreted as cultural wars and the atmosphere of the 1930s, with its dark ghost of fascism, is here again, but in an even more aberrant and entangled way. steirischer herbst was founded in 1968 in Graz, then on the ideological “edge” of the Western world, and brought to life by founder Hanns Koren through an unusual scenario: a political constellation of cultural conservatives created an avant-garde festival in order to oppose the fascists who remained in their midst. This paradoxical context strongly resonates with the bizarrerie of the current political landscape.

In a parcours of specially-commissioned performances, theater pieces, concerts, installations, films, and works-in-progress, steirischer herbst '18 asks questions about the new soft fascism that does not exclude hedonistic individualism and consumerist spirit; the roots of the unlikely alliance of fascism and liberalism; current (mis)use and appropriation of left-wing artistic strategies by the right wing; and the political potential of popular and vernacular art forms. As always, the core program will be accompanied by a diverse range of projects developed by local institutions. Together they present a map of multiple wishes and new proposals for how to consider and counteract the present political moment, and how to enter into crucial debates and confrontations about the intersection of the political and the aesthetic.

The core program of the 51st edition of steirischer herbst is curated by a curatorial collective that includes Ekaterina Degot, Director and Chief Curator; Henriette Gallus, Deputy Director; Christoph Platz, Head of Curatorial Affairs; Övül Ö. Durmusoglu, Katalin Erdödi, and Dominik Müller, Curators; David Riff, Curator for Discourse; Jill Winder, Editor-in-Chief; Birgit Pelzmann and Johanna Rainer, Assistant Curators; and Georg Schöllhammer, General Advisor. The new visual identity is created by Grupa Ee, Ljubljana, and a new publication series is designed by Mevis & Van Deursen, Amsterdam.

The program of steirischer herbst 2018 will be presented in May.

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steirischer herbst curatorial collective

Ekaterina Degot (Director and Chief Curator)

Ekaterina Degot began her five-year tenure as Director and Chief Curator of steirischer herbst in January 2018. In her work, the Russian-born art historian, researcher, and curator focuses on aesthetic and sociopolitical issues in Russia and Eastern Europe from the nineteenth century to the post-Soviet era. From 2014 to November 2017, Degot was Artistic Director of the Academy of the Arts of the World in Cologne. Before that she was Senior Curator at the State Tretyakov Gallery, art columnist for the newspaper *Kommersant*, and from 2008 until 2012 Senior Editor of www.openspace.ru/art. She also regularly contributes to *Artforum*, *Frieze*, and *e-flux journal*. In 2014 she received the Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory. Degot has taught at the European University, St. Petersburg, was guest professor at various American and European universities, and was professor at Moscow's Alexander Rodchenko Photography and New Media school.

In 2001 Degot curated the Russian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. She has also co-curated numerous shows including: *Body Memory: Underwear of the Soviet Era* (with Julia Demidenko), City History Museum, St. Petersburg, 2000, City Museum, Helsinki, Volkskundemuseum, Vienna 2003, among others; *Berlin-Moskau / Moskau-Berlin 1950–2000* (with Jürgen Harten, among others), Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, and History Museum, Moscow, 2003–04; *Soviet Idealism*, Musée de l'art wallon, Liège, 2005; and *If. Ukrainian Art in Transition*, PERMM art museum, Perm, 2010. Together with Cosmin Costinas and David Riff, she curated the First Ural Industrial Biennial in Yekaterinburg under the title *Shockworkers of the Mobile Image* (2010) and in 2011 she presented *Auditorium Moscow* (together with Joanna Mytkowska and David Riff). In 2012 Degot curated *Art After the End of the World*, the discussion platform of the First Kiev Biennial of Contemporary Art *Arsenale* as well as *Time/Food* at the Stella Art Foundation in Moscow with Anton Vidokle and Julieta Aranda. Together with David Riff she headed the first Bergen Assembly under the title *Monday Begins on Saturday* in 2013. Publications include (selection): *Terroristic Naturalism* (1998), *Russian 20th-Century Art* (2000), *Moscow Conceptualism* (with Vadim Zakharov, 2005). Degot was co-editor (with Ilya Budraitskis and Marta Dziewanska) of *Post-Post-Soviet?: Art, Politics and Society in Russia at the Turn of the Decade* (2013).

Henriette Gallus (Deputy Director)

Henriette Gallus studied literature and philosophy in Berlin. She worked as a literary agent at the Simon Literary Agency from 2004 to 2009, specializing in fiction. From 2009 to 2011, she was Head of Public Relations at the independent publishing house Blumenbar, where she was also involved in the work of the editorial office. She managed PR and worked as a scout for the publishing house Rogner & Bernhard

until her appointment as Press Officer of dOCUMENTA (13) in 2011. She was Head of Communications and International Relations for *Monday Begins on Saturday*, the first edition of Bergen Assembly in Norway in 2013, and joined the board of the institution in 2015. Gallus was responsible for the international communication for the 3rd edition of the Berlin Documentary Forum held at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin in 2014, where she also managed the editorial releases and magazine publication for the project. She is a founding member and Communications Director of the international digital publishing endeavor *Fiktion*, set up by German and English-language writers as a model for using the opportunities afforded by the digital to raise the profile of challenging literature and to research how to experiment with reading formats. From 2014 to 2017, she was Head of Communications for documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel. Gallus is International Communications Advisor for the contemporary art program of Castello di Rivoli in Turin and since January 2018 is Deputy Director of steirischer herbst in Graz.

Christoph Platz (Head of Curatorial Affairs)

Christoph Platz studied art history and linguistics. He worked for Skulptur Projekte Münster 07, Kunsthalle Münster, as well as the Westfälischer Kunstverein, and published the treatise *Kunstverein im Umbruch* (2011) on the development of the institution in post-war Germany. At the LWL Museum für Kunst und Kultur he initiated with students of the local university the perennial lecture series *Irgendwas mit Kunst*. Besides exhibition projects in Münster and Düsseldorf he received the EU/NRW Schloss-Ringenberg grant for curators and realized projects in Germany and the Netherlands. In 2010 he became part of the Project Management department of dOCUMENTA (13), which he later headed. In 2013 he was Head of Exhibitions for the first edition of Bergen Assembly in Norway entitled *Monday Begins on Saturday*. He served as independent strategic advisor for the initiation of the public art project *Stadtkuratorin Hamburg* and the Academy of the Arts of the World in Cologne. Christoph Platz was from 2014 to 2017 Head of Exhibition Department of documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel and since 2018 is Head of Curatorial Affairs at steirischer herbst.

Övül Ö. Durmusoglu (Curator)

Övül Ö. Durmusoglu is a curator, researcher, and writer based in Berlin and Istanbul. Recently she has been a guest professor for curatorial theory and praxis at the Nuremberg Fine Arts Academy. In 2015–16 she acted as the Director/Curator of YAMA screen in Istanbul for which she commissioned site-specific works by Banu Cennetoğlu, Pilvi Takala, and Işıl Eğrikavuk. She was also Curatorial and Public Program Advisor for Gülsün Karamustafa's 2016 retrospective exhibition *Chronographia* at Hamburger Bahnhof, for which she co-edited the artist's first extensive monograph. In the past, she was the Artistic Director of the festival Sofia Contemporary 2013 entitled *Near, Closer, Together: Exercises for a Common*

Ground; curated programs for the 10th, 13th, and 14th Istanbul Biennials; coordinated and organized different programs and events of the *Maybe Education and Public Programs* for dOCUMENTA (13). Recent exhibitions include: *Brief Flashes Against A World (Languages of Future)*, Kunsthall Extra City, Antwerp, 2017; *The Finger That Shows The Moon Never Moons*, Dan Gunn, Berlin, 2017; *What's The Riddle, Pi Artworks*, London, 2016; and *Future Queer*, ARK Kultur, Istanbul, 2016. Durmusoglu has lectured widely in institutions such as Dhaka Art Summit '16; Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm; Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, Sao Paulo; 98weeks, Beirut; Qalandiya International, Ramallah; Museo del Tlatelolco, Mexico City; and Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Vienna.

Katalin Erdődi (Curator)

Katalin Erdődi is a curator, dramaturgy advisor, and researcher active in the fields of contemporary art and performance since 2004. Her multifaceted practice focuses on cross-disciplinary collaboration, politically engaged artistic and curatorial strategies, experimental performative formats, and art in public space understood in the broadest sense as social, architectural, and discursive space. She has worked for internationally acknowledged performing arts and visual arts institutions such as Trafó House of Contemporary Arts, Budapest; Ludwig Museum, Budapest; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Leipzig. Most recently, from 2013 to 2015 she was curator at brut Wien and Artistic Director of imagetanz Festival for Choreography and Performance. Alongside her work for institutions, as an independent curator she has co-founded and co-curated a series of innovative cultural initiatives in Hungary: PLACCC – International Festival for Site-specific Performance and *Art in Public Space* (2008–11); *Body Moving – Contemporary Dance in Urban Spaces* (2009–14); and *Social Honey*, Budapest, 2013, a public art project bringing together art, political critique, and community engagement. Since 2015 she has been working as a freelance curator in Austria and Hungary, on long-term collaborations with artists such as Núria Güell and Antje Schiffers, as dramaturgy advisor for Gin Müller, Oleg Soulimenko, Sööt/Zeyringer and Doris Uhlich, and as co-curator of the monthly experimental music and performance series *DerBlödeDritteMittwoch*.

Dominik Müller (Curator)

Dominik Müller works as a curator and dramaturg in contemporary theater and performing arts. As a student of theater, comparative literature, and sociology in Munich he also gathered broad experience in various roles in independent productions and theaters. He was a co-founder of the Munich based group CADAM., with which he developed research based projects at Pinakothek der Moderne, in Munich's Pathos Theater and in public space, among others. His interest in curating in the performing arts led to him being a co-founder of junge kuratorische Gesellschaft, an informal network of young theater professionals

investigating curatorial practices in their field. He has lectured on curating and Germany's independent theater scene. Together with Mareike Theile he curated *Urban War Stories*, a series of performative guided tours in Cologne. After a short stint at steirischer herbst in 2011, he worked with Florian Malzacher at Impulse Theater Festival from 2011 to 2017, where he last served as a dramaturg. Most recently he was dramaturg for Gessnerallee Zurich, one of Switzerland's most prestigious production venues for contemporary performing arts.

David Riff (Curator of Discourse)

David Riff studied Cultural Anthropology at SUNY New Paltz (US) and Slavonic studies and art history at the Ruhr University Bochum (Germany). Riff has written widely on the history and present of contemporary art in Russia as an art critic and has translated extensively; his most recent project was *The Crisis of Ugliness* (1968) by Soviet aesthetic philosopher Mikhail Lifshitz. Riff was a member of the workgroup *Chto delat/What is to be done?* and has been involved in other artistic collaborations. Recent curatorial projects include: *If our soup can could speak. Mikhail Lifshitz and the Soviet Sixties* (with Dmitry Gutov), Garage, Moscow, 2018; the *PLURIVERSALE* festival (as co-curator with Ekaterina Degot), Academy of the Arts of the World, Cologne (2014–2017), *Monday Begins on Saturday* (with Ekaterina Degot), Bergen Assembly, 2013; and *Shockworkers of the Mobile Image* (with Cosmin Costinas and Ekaterina Degot), the first Ural Industrial Biennial, Ekaterinburg, 2010. Riff is based in Moscow and Berlin.

Jill Winder (Editor-in-Chief)

Jill Winder is a writer and editor who studied political theory and holds an M.A. from the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York. Most recently, she was Online Editor for *documenta 14* (2015–17). Previously she was managing editor for the publications of the 7th and 8th Berlin Biennales (2012/2014); Head of Research and Publications for Bergen Assembly (2012–13); and Editor-in-Chief of *art-agenda* (2012–14). From 2007 to 2011 she was Curator of Publications at BAK, *basis voor actuele kunst*, Utrecht, where she served as co-founding editor of BAK's *Critical Reader* series. Winder has been awarded research and writing fellowships from the Institute of Current World Affairs and the Thomas J. Watson Foundation, and has edited and co-edited numerous artists' monographs and critical readers. She is based in Berlin.

Birgit Pelzmann (Assistant Curator)

Birgit Pelzmann is a curator, production manager, and cultural worker with a background in art history and exhibition design. Since 2005 she has been working at the intersection between research, conception, production, and education. In 2011 she curated the exhibition and research project *DIS/PLAY/GROUND* and co-curated *PLATFORM3 Futures* (both *PLATFORM3*, Munich). Since 2014 she has

been working as assistant curator and production manager for steirischer herbst, collaborating on the following exhibitions and projects in this function: *Forms of Distancing. Representative Politics and the Politics of Representation*, 2014; *Hall of Half Life*, 2015; *Body Luggage*, 2016; *Mikrokosmos* by Steffani Jemison and Justin Hicks, 2016; *Prometheus Unbound*, 2017, *Kicking the Dead*, Walid Raad, 2017, and on site-specific works in public space by Ulla von Brandenburg, 2015; Mikala Dwyer, 2015; Kiluanji Kia Henda, 2016; and Vajiko Chachkhiani, 2017. She is curator in residence at Residency Unlimited in New York from mid-October to December 2018.

Johanna Rainer (Assistant Curator)

Johanna Rainer studied art history in Graz, Rome, and Nantes, graduating from the master's program Cultures of the Curatorial in Leipzig in 2015. From 2009 to 2017 she co-developed and organized writing workshops and events by and for students for the kunsttext.werk association, which she co-founded. From 2010 to 2017 she was artistic assistant at steirischer herbst, during which time she was co-editor of the publication *Truth is concrete: A handbook for artistic strategies in real politics* (2014). She was also a member of the concept team of the herbst Academy *Welcome to the former West. Mental maps and decolonial perspectives on the here and now*, 2016 and the philosophical canteen *Where Are We Now? A joint attempt to define our position in theory and practice*, 2017.

Georg Schöllhammer (General Advisor)

Georg Schöllhammer is an editor, writer, and curator based in Vienna. He is Founding Editor of *springerin* and Head of tranzit.at. Schöllhammer has worked internationally on cultural projects including documenta, Manifesta, the Biennales of Venice, Sao Paulo, Gyumri and The School of Kiev 2015, Sweet Sixties, L'internationale, and Former West. He is founder of The Július Koller Society. Recent projects Schöllhammer (co-)curated include *Július Koller, One Man Anti-Show*, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, 2015, mumok, Vienna, 2016, Museion, Bolzano; 2017, *A Traveling Academy in Postsoviet Space*; 2016, *The School of Kyiv*, Kyiv Biennial, 2015/2016; *Soviet Postwar, Garage Museum*, Moscow, 2013–15; and *The Capital of Desires*, the Armenian Pavillion at the Venice Biennale of Architecture, 2014. Recent publications *Július Koller* (2016), *Ion Grigorescu, Diaries 1970–1974* (2014), *KwieKulik* (2013), *Moments – A history of performance in 10 acts* (co-edited with Sigrid Gareis and Peter Weibel, 2013), and *Sweet Sixties* (2013).

Designers

Grupa Ee (Visual Identity)

Grupa Ee is an independent design collective based in Ljubljana, Slovenia, which was established in 2003. The trio Mina Fina, Damjan Ilić, and Ivian Kan Mujezinović share a similar aesthetics and value a stimulating working process. Although members of the group design some of their projects individually, they benefit from working as a team through sharing their experience and views on design in general. Grupa Ee mostly work for clients in the cultural field such as theaters, galleries, museums, and publishers including Glej Theatre; Mladinsko Theatre; MGLC – The International Centre of Graphic Arts; Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts 2013 & 2015; MAO – Museum of Architecture and Design; BIO Biennial of Design 2017; The Contemporary Dance Association Slovenia; The Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory; Institute Atol; National Museum of Slovenia; and *Mladina* magazine. Their work is experimental, daring, and progressive.

Mevis & Van Deursen (Publication series)

Mevis & van Deursen is the internationally-renowned graphic design studio of Armand Mevis and Linda van Deursen. They graduated from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. Their work—with its focus on publications and identities for artists, fashion designers, and architects—embraces an unraveled exploration of the interplay between imagery and typography, which originates from their preference for abstracting ideologies. Their commissioners include the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Walther König Verlag, JRP Ringier, Hatje Cantz, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, MoMA, New York, The Art Institute of Chicago, The New Institute, Rotterdam, and documenta 14 in Kassel. Mevis directs the Werkplaats Typografie (ArtEZ, Arnhem, the Netherlands); van Deursen is a critic at Yale, School of Art, New Haven and at the KABK, the Hague.