

Jury unanimously votes for extension until 2027: Second term for steirischer herbst director and chief curator Ekaterina Degot

Ekaterina Degot is reappointed as director and chief curator of steirischer herbst festival gmbh for the period 2023 to 2027. The representatives of steirischer herbst's shareholders, minister of culture **Christopher Drexler** for the Province of Styria and city councilor for culture **Günter Riegler** for the City of Graz, are following the unanimous recommendation of the search committee. Degot has held the position of director and chief curator since 2018.

Statement by the search committee

“Ekaterina Degot submitted an excellent application and gave an excellent presentation. In extremely difficult times, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic in the last two years, she designed programs with very positive international feedback and has thus strengthened the position of steirischer herbst as an outstanding festival. She presented her leitmotif ‘Art should be connected to Life and give Hope’ in an impressive way. Ekaterina Degot stands for trailblazing, transdisciplinary projects that point the way in our time of global transformations. Moreover, in the current situation of a war in Europe and at this turning point in history, Ekaterina Degot seems to the committee particularly capable of leading a festival into the future.”

The search committee was led by **Heinz Wietrzyk** (head of the supervisory board) and consisted of **Peter Pakesch** (member of the supervisory board as well as board member of the Maria Lassnig Foundation), **Kathrin Rhomberg** (curator for contemporary art as well as artistic director and chairwoman of the Kontakt Collection), **Sahar Mohsenzada** (member of the supervisory board), **Milo Tesselaar** (member of the supervisory board) and **Günther Witamwas** (cultural advisor, city of Graz).

Statement by Ekaterina Degot

“During my first period as director and chief curator, the world changed a lot: the pandemic challenged festival operations again and again, and now we are facing another worldwide threat. The bloody war of Putinist Russia against Ukraine in the heart of Europe, which we are now experiencing, brings a déjà vu for steirischer herbst. ‘We know how serious the hour is that the world clock is currently showing,’ Hanns Koren said in September 1968 when he opened the first edition of steirischer herbst—and how true do these words ring today!

steirischer herbst survived the Cold War and the Yugoslav Wars, and in the years to come it will learn to play an even more central role on the European map, which has been tragically changing since February 2022. The bloody war in Ukraine and the extremely repressive regimes in Belarus and Russia create new challenges for the world and also for the festival. As someone who lived in Cold War Soviet Union and suffered from it, I know very well what is needed culturally and artistically at this moment.

steirischer herbst is very rooted locally, and I know and see how proud Styrians are of their province and how committed they are to it. At the same time, the festival stands for a strong aspiration to be international, to be part of the larger world. As someone who came from a permanent 'lockdown' in the Soviet Union and learned five languages during that time just to feel connected to the world, I know how strong the desire is not to be isolated and how we should support it now, in these sad times of increasing nationalism and narrow-mindedness all over the world, but also in this part of Europe.

In these times we need a radical solidarity with each other, a being together. This is what steirischer herbst has stood for since its founding. That's why I will work even harder in the next five years to open up steirischer herbst to everybody."

About Ekaterina Degot

The Moscow-born art historian, researcher, and curator has led steirischer herbst as director and chief curator since 2018. Prior to that, from 2014 to 2017, Ekaterina Degot was artistic director of the Akademie der Künste der Welt in Cologne. The focus of her work is on aesthetic and sociopolitical issues in Russia and Eastern Europe from the 19th century to the post-Soviet era. Among other shows, she curated the 1st Ural Industrial Biennial in Yekaterinburg (2010, with Cosmin Costinas and David Riff) and headed the first Bergen Assembly with Riff (2013). Degot lives in Graz

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