

steirischer herbst '24: *Horror Patriae* 19.9.–13.10.

In this super election year, horror could become permanent. Elections are held all over the world—including in Austria. And everywhere, nationalism is rearing its ugly head and whispering seductive slogans.

steirischer herbst wants to expose the seduction, question the narratives, dissect the fatherland, and put its horrors in their place. The festival's means are the same as when it was founded in the late 1960s, a time in which the painful consequences of Nazism could be felt everywhere. Back then, performances, exhibitions, interventions, music, and literature were meant to disturb, shake things up, tear away the masks, and let in fresh air. They must do the same today.

Horror Patriae—horror of the fatherland

Titled *Horror Patriae*, steirischer herbst '24 takes place from **19 September to 13 October** in Graz and Styria. The Latin title is a hybrid, born of the love of the fatherland (*amor patriae*) and the fear of emptiness (*horror vacui*). But what is the fatherland? How is it created? Who defines it? And why on earth should we love it? Or fear it?

Director and chief curator Ekaterina Degot on this year's concept:

Is our origin important? Does it matter where we were born? More and more, the world seems to tell us so. We are supposed to have ancestors, roots, traditions, identities, territories, tribes, and nations. We must belong. For those who do not belong, who feel excluded, or do not identify with their nation, this is frightening. Perhaps even a horror. A horror of the fatherland. The homeland becomes uncanny. Do you live in your country of birth? Are you part of the "leading culture" that is currently so strongly debated in Austria? Would you like to be? These are serious questions, but they also open the door to imagination and humor. Nations, borders, roots, and customs are all fictions rather than realities. One of the places where they were formed, historically, is the museum. This is why the central group exhibition revolves around the Universalmuseum Joanneum and its history.

Program preview (selection)

Natalia Pschenitschnikova opens steirischer herbst '24 on 19 September at 17:00 in the Lesliehof with her musical performance *A.E.I.O.U.*, joined by six other renowned musicians. As a prologue—following the Aufsteirern folk festival—**Yoshinori Niwa** places an election poster in public space that slowly disintegrates, thus dissecting flag-waving political discourse in the middle of the election period. And in *The Phantom of the Operetta*, the transnational collective **La Fleur** drops the chandelier onto the audience—metaphorically speaking.

New York-born artist and composer **Ari Benjamin Meyers** is considered a shooting star of the contemporary art world. Following works for the Festival d'Avignon and the Berliner Festspiele (both in 2023), he presents *Nation of Sleep* at steirischer herbst. In a bizarre role reversal, children sing lullabies to adults—on a giant indoor tennis court. Well-known British author Tom McCarthy contributes the text.

Another highlight is the new work by Belgian artist **Thomas Verstraeten** from the renowned collective **FC Bergman**, awarded the Silver Lion at last year's Venice Theater Biennale. Under Verstraeten's direction, an immersive theater experience negotiating regional clichés and the appropriation of nature is created in the historical Graz department store Kastner & Öhler. Werner Fenz Grant winner **Clara Ianni**, on the other hand, stages a literal resurrection of nature, while director **Felix Hafner** and his ensemble retrace the absurdity of a 1925 Styrian song and dance evening in Addis Ababa.

Of course, the festival also includes venues beyond Graz's city limits. **Gerald Straub**, for instance, performs his *Corridos Estiria* at a traffic circle near Studenzen and at other locations. This popular musical tradition originating in Mexico often narrates the deeds of bandits and heroes. A guest performance also brings this project from the Partner Program to Graz's main square.

For this festival edition, **Theater im Bahnhof** relives the implosion of the Freedom Party of Austria at their 2002 Knittelfeld convention in *Spiel mir das Lied von Knittelfeld oder die Pubertät der FPÖ* (Once Upon a Time in Knittelfeld, or the Freedom Party's Puberty).

In addition to these and other performances, **all commissioned by the festival**, the centerpiece of steirischer herbst '24 is a large **group exhibition**, also titled *Horror Patriae*, at **Neue Galerie Graz**. In its historic building, the festival creates an alternative museum of national complexes and dark fantasies. The exhibition combines works and artifacts from various collections of the **Universalmuseum Joanneum** with works by contemporary artists. Organized into several fictitious

departments, it tells stories that depart from local myth but reach out into the broader world. Is this museum of dysfunctional and contradictory nationhood the only way to imagine a national museum in a time like ours, when patriotic sentiments are getting good press even if they have a darker side? Such questions are explored in new commissions by **Sarnath Banerjee, Sergey Bratkov, Pablo Bronstein, Madison Bycroft, Ieva Epnere, Assaf Gruber, Jan Peter Hammer, Thomas Hörl, Jakub Jansa, Nikolay Karabinovych, Alina Kleytman, Ingo Niermann and Erik Niedling, Roe Rosen, Marko Tadić, Helene Thümmel, and Piotr Urbaniec.**

The exhibition is a cooperation between steirischer herbst and **Neue Galerie Graz / Universalmuseum Joanneum.**

A second exhibition at Forum Stadtpark, ***Kunst Heimat Kunst Revisited***, uses archival material to shed light on the exhibition series *Kunst Heimat Kunst* (1992–94). This project was developed by Graz-based curator and art historian **Werner Fenz** (1944–2016) when the Yugoslav Wars were raging in Austria's immediate vicinity. The first works from the new collection of the Werner Fenz Grant at steirischer herbst are also shown as part of this exhibition.

For the third year in a row, steirischer herbst turns to cabaret and its capacity for gritty, gutsy social criticism. Three double bills present a mix of burlesque, chanson, stand-up, and poetry. With six new shows by **László Göndör, hannsjana, Bernadette Laimbauer, Annina Machaz, Piotr Urbaniec, and Alex Franz Zehetbauer.**

The format Ideas also returns with a series of “deathmatches” where participants discursively vie for the audience's favor on the most important topics of the super election year.

Artists and collectives

Sarnath Banerjee, Renate Bertlmann, Anna Boghiguan, Sergey Bratkov, Pablo Bronstein, Madison Bycroft, Ieva Epnere, VALIE EXPORT, La Fleur, Peter Friedl, Robert Gabris, Tomislav Gotovac, Assaf Gruber, Felix Hafner, Jan Peter Hammer, Thomas Hörl, Clara Ianni, Jakub Jansa, Nikolay Karabinovych, Alina Kleytman, Augustin Maurs, Mélange Oriental, Ari Benjamin Meyers, Marta Navaridas, Ingo Niermann and Erik Niedling, Yoshinori Niwa, Paulina Ołowska, Michèle Pagel, Hannes Priesch, Natalia Pschenitschnikova, Roe Rosen, Daniel Rycharski, Franz von Strolchen, Marko Tadić, Theater im Bahnhof, Helene Thümmel, Piotr Urbaniec, Thomas Verstraeten, Andreas Werner; herbst cabaret with László Göndör, hannsjana, Bernadette Laimbauer, Annina Machaz, Piotr Urbaniec, and Alex Franz Zehetbauer

Artists from the collection of Neue Galerie Graz

AES+F, András Felvidéki, Wolf Gössler, Hans Werner Poschauko, Drago Julius Prelog, Paolo Tessari, Norbert Trummer, Franco Vaccari, and others

Festivals-within-the-festival

As ever, steirischer herbst comprises two festivals-within-the-festival. From 3 to 6 October, the 57th **ORF musikprotokoll** is dedicated to *Spaces of Freedom* and explores how sociopolitical conditions, artistic approaches, and artificial intelligence enable freedom in musical contexts. **Out of Joint, the literary festival within steirischer herbst**, once again dares to look into the future and the past and asks what has become of the great European peace project. Taking place from 8 to 11 October, it is titled *Die Welt von gestern / die Welt von morgen* (The World of Yesterday / The World of Tomorrow).

Partner Program

This year, too, various cultural institutions and artists from Graz and Styria create their own projects within the framework of steirischer herbst. The 2024 partners include: **APORON 21, Camera Austria, esc medien kunst labor, Forum Stadtpark, Grazer Kunstverein, Haus lebt 2024, HDA – Haus der Architektur, KRA, KULTUMUSEUM, Kunsthaus Graz, Bernadette Laimbauer, manuskripte, Xava Mikosch, Das Planetenparty Prinzip, QL-Galerie, Schaumbad – Freies Atelierhaus Graz, Schauspielhaus Graz, and Gerald Straub.**

Ö1 Festival Podcast

For the fifth year in a row, steirischer herbst is collaborating with the public broadcaster Ö1 for a festival podcast. Focusing on contemporary art in its various forms, promoting interdisciplinarity in art, and providing sufficient space for reflection on current events—these are all topics that connect Ö1 and steirischer herbst. This year, too, the festival podcast will invite further conversations and thoughts—both on Ö1 and on sound.ORF.at.

steirischer herbst '24 is curated by Ekaterina Degot, David Riff, Gábor Thury, and Pieter Vermeortel, assisted by Beatrice Forchini and Tobias Ihl, and created by all participating artists, speakers, and partner institutions, as well as the festival's whole team.

The complete program will be published on **9 August**. Online ticket sales also start on this day.

Online accreditation for press and professionals opens in August. For prior registration and further information, please contact press@steirischerherbst.at.

Images: 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.

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

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