

## steirischer herbst '23—*Humans and Demons* 21.9.–15.10., Graz and Styria, Austria

steirischer herbst '23 opens on Thursday, 21 September. In its 56th edition, the interdisciplinary arts festival turns to character-based storytelling to show how people navigate today's moral gray zones and deal with the demons surrounding them. This year, steirischer herbst brings together over forty works, many of them new commissions. Next to performances, the herbst cabaret, artist talks, and discussions, four exhibitions take visitors on a journey of discovery through Graz and its history.

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### Opening weekend (21.9.–24.9.)

The festival starts on Schloßberg near the city's landmark, the historical clock tower. An imposing monument of a soldier stands there, whose aggressive 1930s heroism hardly resonates with contemporary sensibilities. Festival director **Ekaterina Degot** and artist **Lulu Obermayer** refer to this demonic figure from the past in a speech and opera performance (in cooperation with Oper Graz), respectively.

The festivities continue down on lively Mariahilferplatz, where the festival is officially opened with a discussion about rules and regulations in town. The audience will hear different opinions, and performance artist **Michael Portnoy** introduces a new political figure for Graz: the director of behavior.

The first day closes with a new performance by **Adrienn Hód** and her company **HODWORKS** about the pressures and seductions of obedience at Helmut List Halle. It is followed by the first herbst club featuring the **Feschak Orkestra** and the **Grrrls DJ Crew**, the first ever event in the new Halle D. The four group exhibitions of steirischer herbst '23 (see below) also open on 21 September.

The opening weekend continues with more newly commissioned performances as well as a concert by **ILYICH**. **Michael Portnoy** reinvents human exchange in a carnivalesque gathering. **Giacomo Veronesi** looks at geopolitical gray zones on the Estonian-Russian border. **Mateja Bučar** stops traffic on central Annenstraße to uncover the scars left by Graz's Nazi past (in cooperation with the CLIO association).

On Friday and Saturday, **artist talks** (with **Maria Loboda** and **Meg Stuart**, among others) constitute a first highlight of the discourse program Ideas. Audiences not in Graz can view the talks via live stream. herbst education starts its tours and popular *Eat and Greet*s, where visitors can talk to artists and curators over a meal after

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performances. Artist workshops and broadcasts produced by **Grätzelinitiative Margaretenbad** for Radio Helsinki are new to herbst education's program this year. Once again, steirischer herbst is also accompanied by the **Ö1 Festival Podcast**.

In the Partner Program, a day trip to Prenning takes visitors to the opening of **prenninger Gespräche**'s library inside Haus des Widerstands / Haus Feuerlöscher.

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### Group exhibitions (21.9.–15.10.)

Four group exhibitions in to some extent unusual locations revolve around semifictional protagonists connected to Graz's history. Neither heroes nor villains, they resemble the charismatic rogues of the picaresque novel—an early modern form that fits a city flaunting a premodern topography. In many newly commissioned works, artists deal with the issues raised by these figures and their stories, addressing not only Graz's past, but also its present, such as the demolition of the impressive Vorklinik building.

#### Demon Radio

Up in the hills of Graz, a derelict call center turns into *Demon Radio*, haunted by Dietrich Schulz-Köhn aka Dr. Jazz: Nazi party member, Luftwaffe officer, jazz aficionado, and radio host.

#### Artists

Zuleikha Chaudhari  
Anna Engelhardt and Mark Cinkevich  
Dani Gal  
Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys  
Anton Kats  
Michael Stevenson  
Markus Sworcik and René Stiegler

#### Villa Perpetuum Mobile

Cultural institution Forum Stadtpark turns into *Villa Perpetuum Mobile*, the fictitious residence of exiled Bulgarian dissident and fringe physicist Stefan Marinov, who was searching for a source of free energy.

#### Artists

Alice Creischer  
Vadim Fishkin  
Hollis Frampton  
Pedro Gómez-Egaña  
Michael Stevenson

#### Church of Ruined Modernity

The monastic ensemble of Minoritenkloster and Minoritenzentrum Graz becomes the *Church of Ruined Modernity*. It is inspired by Brazilian Neo-Concretist Mira Schendel, who passed through Graz in 1944 and later exhibited here, yet left almost no traces.

#### Artists

Pavel Bräila  
Andrea Büttner  
Andreas Fogarasi  
Cyprien Gaillard  
Dana Kavelina  
Maria Loboda  
Eteri Nozadze  
Meg Stuart

#### Submarine Frieda

On lowly Griesplatz, a former supermarket is transformed into *Submarine Frieda*. It is named after a woman who only exists in a picture of a peace protest in Gries—doctored to evade Nazi persecution.

#### Artists

Lucile Desamory  
Georg Haberler  
Shimabuku

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#### Second week (25.9.–1.10.)

In the second week, **Theater im Bahnhof** premieres its performance about radical participatory alternatives for municipal politics, and **Madame Nielsen** intervenes into the life and death of David Bowie in her show at Orpheum. Both are new commissions by the festival, just like the herbst cabaret shows by **Julie Béna** and **Jessika and Jimmy Khazrik**. Following the first cabaret evening, **rio obskur** and **Ultra Flair** play at herbst club.

The festival also focuses on the Partner Program this week. There are performances of Franz von Strolchen's *Das Schiff des Theseus* at **Theater am Lend** and the **Griessner Stadl** production *Das Erdbeben in Chili*—a people's opera by Elisabeth Harnik and Martin Kreidt presented by Grazer Spielstätten / Bühnen Graz—as well as the new piece by **Das Planetenparty Prinzip**, *Who Wants to Be the Mum?*

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On Wednesday, the jubilee program for **Kunsthhaus Graz**'s twentieth anniversary starts. In this context, steirischer herbst and Kunsthhaus Graz present a jointly commissioned durational performance by **Jasmina Cibic**. In *Protocol for Utopia: The Dreams We Call Our Own*, the artist deals with the patriarchal quality of political speech.

The traditional tour of Partner Program exhibitions takes place on Saturday. In guided tours and talks, **Camera Austria**, **esc medien kunst labor**, **Grazer Kunstverein**, **HDA – Haus der Architektur**, **KULTUMUSEUM Graz**, and **Roter Keil** provide insights into their current shows. There are also events in the exhibitions of **QL-Galerie**, **KiG! Kultur in Graz**, and **APORON 21** in the second week. And the exhibition cluster *Kunst der Flucht. Kunst der Fuge* (Art of Flight. Art of Fugue) by **Heinz Trenczak** celebrates its opening.

Additional highlights in the Partner Program are the two-day **Grundrechtstag 2023** symposium on *Umbruch – Über Glaube, Meinung und Fakten in ungewissen Zeiten* (Upheaval: On Faith, Opinion, and Facts in Uncertain Times) and the scenic hike / performance by **Karin Hochegger**, **Rike Scheffler**, and **Christoph Szalay** on the Ramsau plateau; a free shuttle bus is provided by steirischer herbst. A literary performance and workshop by **manuskripte** and a walking tour along Annenstraße by the **CLIO Verein für Geschichts- und Bildungsarbeit** also take place for the first time.

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### Third week (2.10.–8.10.)

Between 5 and 10 October, **ORF musikprotokoll im steirischen herbst** unites twenty-five projects under the title *interconnected / interdependent*, with concerts by **RSO Wien**, **Klangforum Wien**, numerous **SHAPE+ artists**, and an opera premiere by **Nina Šenk**. There will be a separate press conference at ORF-Landesstudio Steiermark (Studio 3) on 3 October at 10:00.

For the first time, herbst educations offers events in cooperation with ORF musikprotokoll and also kicks off a series of experts' talks related to the *Humans and Demons* group exhibitions during this week.

At **Graz Museum**, the exhibition *Protest!* opens, which features, among others, exhibits from the history of steirischer herbst.

In the context of Ideas, the festival is shuttling visitors to a conversation between **Peter Sloterdijk** and **Slavoj Žižek** in Ljubljana, a cooperation with the **INDIGO Festival**, and offers a live stream of this event on its website. Another highlight of the

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discourse program is the one-day symposium *Curating the Troubled Past* (with **Defne Ayas, Hans D. Christ, Iris Dressler, Tom Engels, Elisabeth Fiedler, Ruth Noack,** and **Ares Shporta**), which resumes the series of curatorial panel discussions begun in February.

Moreover, the second edition of *steirischer herbst at manuskripte* with readings and a sound performance awaits the audience, as well as another herbst club show with **Half Darling** and two herbst cabaret evenings with **Stefanie Sourial** and **Barbara Juch**.

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### Fourth week (9.10.–15.10.)

On Tuesday, the second festival-within-the-festival, **Out of Joint**, the literary festival within steirischer herbst, opens with a speech by **Birgit Birnbacher**. Until 13 October, there are readings and discussions at Literaturhaus Graz on the topic *Wer gegen when? (Who against Whom?)*, as well as the traditional finale, the literary show *Roboter mit Senf*.

At **Schauspielhaus Graz**, Elfriede Jelinek's play *Sonne/Luft (Sun/Air)* celebrates its Austrian premiere in cooperation with steirischer herbst. After the second performance, an *Eat and Greet* as well as a herbst club with **GreyNote** and **d:enigma** invite audiences to eat, talk, and dance following the performance.

In the Partner Program, **Steirische Gesellschaft für Kulturpolitik** is also hosting a discussion on human rights and solidarity, while **Lisa Höllebauer** and **Lisa Schantl** are organizing the reading *Writer(s) in Climate Crisis*. At **HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark**, an exhibition opens on the last days of the festival.

**Mikołaj Sobczak** and **Selin Davasse** are the final artists of this year's herbst cabaret. The festival itself closes with a game show-like panel discussion that imagines steirischer herbst in fifty years (with **Thomas Geiger, Markus Gönitzer, Christoph Gurk, Rose-Anne Gush, Ulrike Haidacher, Ulrich Lenz, Ferdinand Nagele, Irina Nalis, Peter Pakesch, Jan Tappe, and Helene Thümmel**).

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A fixture during the whole festival is the **Visitor and Press Center** (which opens today), centrally located inside Kunsthhaus Graz, as well as the four **herbst bars** with their special offers: **Café Centraal** (herbst breakfast), **Contra Punto** (herbst pizza), **Feinkost Mild** (herbst sandwich), and **Die Beate** (herbst drink).

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Details on all events and artists can be found at [www.steirischerherbst.at](http://www.steirischerherbst.at) and in the program book (DE/EN), which is available for free at the Visitor and Press Center and at all *Humans and Demons* venues.

Tickets for *Humans and Demons* performances and the herbst cabaret are available at the Visitor and Press Center and at [www.steirischerherbst.at](http://www.steirischerherbst.at). The group exhibitions have free admission thanks to Arbeiterkammer Steiermark.

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### Artists and collectives

Pavel Bräila, Mateja Bučar, Andrea Büttner, Zuleikha Chaudhari, Jasmina Cibic, Alice Creischer, Lucile Desamory, Anna Engelhardt and Mark Cinkevich, Vadim Fishkin, Andreas Fogarasi, Hollis Frampton, Cyprien Gaillard, Dani Gal, Pedro Gómez-Egaña, Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys, Georg Haberler, Adrienn Hód / HODWORKS, Anton Kats / ILYICH, Dana Kavelina, Maria Loboda, Madame Nielsen, Eteri Nozadze, Lulu Obermayer, Michael Portnoy, Shimabuku, Michael Stevenson, Meg Stuart, Markus Sworcik and René Stiegler, Theater im Bahnhof, Giacomo Veronesi; herbst cabaret with Julie Béna, Selin Davasse, Barbara Juch, Jessika and Jimmy Khazrik, Mikołaj Sobczak, Stefanie Sourial

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### Partner Program

Twenty-five projects in Graz and Styria are part of this year's festival. The 2023 partners are: APORON 21, Camera Austria, CLIO Verein für Geschichts- und Bildungsarbeit, esc medien kunst labor, Grätzelinitiative Margaretenbad, Grazer Kunstverein, Grazer Spielstätten / Bühnen Graz / Griessner Stadl, Graz Museum, Grundrechtstag 2023, HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, HDA – Haus der Architektur, Karin Hochegger / Rike Scheffler / Christoph Szalay, Lisa Höllebauer and Lisa Schantl, KiG! Kultur in Graz, Kunsthaus Graz, KULTUMUSEUM Graz, manuskripte, QL-Galerie, Das Planetenparty Prinzip, prenninger gespräche, Roter Keil, Schauspielhaus Graz, Steirische Gesellschaft für Kulturpolitik, Theater am Lend, Heinz Trenczak.

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steirischer herbst '23 is curated by Ekaterina Degot, David Riff, Pieternel Vermoortel, Gábor Thury, and Barbara Seyerl and created by all participating artists, speakers, partner institutions as well as the festival's whole team. herbst cabaret is curated by Mirela Baciak.

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Press and professional visitors are welcome to apply for accreditation at <https://www.steirischerherbst.at/accreditation> for the opening days and other premieres and events throughout the festival.

Images are available at: [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.

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

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