

steirischer herbst 2015

"Back to the Future": steirischer herbst 2015 takes a hard look both back and forward. The fact that the future can prove dangerous without a profound analysis of the present and the past, is made evident by a whole array of science-fiction and time-travel films such as "Metropolis", "Terminator" and the "Back to the Future" trilogy. Today, time-travels, like those of Marty McFly (forecast to land in the future on 21 October 2015), still derive from a futuristic idea lying ahead of us. Anyone who wants to look and think ahead, to make themselves, as it were, compatible with the future, and, at the same time, not letting heritage deteriorate into a sentimental apparatus, must rethink the past, scrutinise, review and critically interrogate the old.

steirischer herbst playfully picks up on this idea, focusing in many different ways on the notion of "inheritance" – our present is yesterday's future. This not only involves reaching far back into the retro worlds of pop culture. Rather, current discussions concerning common cultural heritage – based on whatever definition – have long since become part of a discourse on the traditional values of western society in its dialogue with communities that work differently. What do we inherit and how do we handle this inheritance? What do we archive and what do we pass on to future generations? What must we say goodbye to? Can we in contemporary art work on communication systems of a distant future? Ambivalent thoughts such as these are the starting point for a wide range of artistic processes and are reflected in many different forms in the 2015 steirischer herbst programme.

This wide-ranging programme kicks off with a premiere preceded by several years of preparation. The composer **Johannes Maria Staud** meets the writer **Josef Winkler**. Their joint work "Specter of the Gardenia oder Der Tag wird kommen", specially developed for steirischer herbst, is a subtle interplay of music, text and film. Not an opera, but an installation-based concert performance, that can also be related to the leitmotif of "Back to the Future" – with glimpses back to the childhood of Josef Winkler and ominous prospects of an endangered future. The 2015 steirischer herbst opening production, staged by the young director Sofia Simitzis, premières at the Helmut List Halle on 25 September.

How the past and future interweave is already manifested by the central venue: the steirischer herbst **festival centre** this year is based at the GrazMuseum, a location devoted to preserving and constantly reinterpreting past and present urban space. Its rooms on the ground floor are transformed into a space station by the Rome-based architecture collective **orizzontale**. Star Trek anyone?

But there can be no science-fiction without aliens and communication with distant worlds. This question – how can we devise a language, a sign system for the future? – is the starting point of the **herbst exhibition** "Hall of Half-Life", presented by New Zealand curator **Tessa Giblin** at the GrazMuseum. Above and beyond being an enjoyable thought experiment, this is a profoundly ecological and political question – even if you just consider how much buried nuclear waste there is that will one day, perhaps long before the end of its half-life, be discovered, posing a threat to future civilisations. The artists are invited to develop an archaeology of the future, with most of the

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works being developed especially for the show. And because preserving things always implies reinterpreting what already exists, Irish artist **Gerard Byrne** uses his intervention "Bright Sign" to overwrite and comment on the permanent exhibition at the GrazMuseum in his own way.

In addition to the herbst exhibition, numerous other projects are set in this festival centre: British artist **Phoebe Davies** joins young women from Graz to run a temporary feminist nail bar; Graz-based historian **Joachim Hainzl** installs an archive of dumped knowledge and discarded memories; and **Jochen Becker**, **Christian Hanussek** and **Daniel Kötter** show their "Chinafrika. Under Construction" presentation. steirischer herbst also resumes its series of concerts in and around the festival centre with **Soundtracks**: every Wednesday and Saturday visitors can watch live acts here including **Die Buben im Pelz**, **Pollyester**, **Young Fathers** and **Lambert**.

The array of (world) premières at the festival is as tightly packed as always. We are eagerly awaiting the première of Danish choreographer and dancer **Mette Ingvartsen's** "7 Pleasures" – twelve performers carry out a large collective movement in seven stages, questioning concepts of nudity and sexuality. For "Luise 37", the **Rabtaldirndln** are lacing up their football boots and donning their shin pads at the Kulturhalle in Hart bei Graz, aiming to break out of the comfort zone with feminist brute force, while the **Nature Theater of Oklahoma** presents a gala evening of three film premières that continue their long-term project documenting the life-story of one member of the company, Kristin Worrall: "Life and Times – Episodes 7 - 8 - 9". Episode 9 even has a local reference: the zany gangsta rap video on roller-skates was shot in Graz last year.

In "Vergeetstuk" (Act to Forget), the young Fleming **Tom Struyf** tries to find out why he has no memory of his past, while the Styrian/international artist formation The Loose Collective takes the slushy musical "The Sound of Music" as an inspiration to reflect on national identity and belonging: "The Music of Sound". Talking of artistic and political legacies: the documentary theatre company **Rimini Protokoll** deals with Adolf Hitler's manifesto "Mein Kampf", which will be available to the public once again (at least in Germany) as of 2016.

In addition, steirischer herbst travels again far and wide around Styria, laying down a number of artistic axes: in areas hit hard by migration – in the municipality of Vordernberg and in Leoben, for example. When **Theater im Bahnhof** develops „Black Moonshine“, a play about everyday life in Vordernberg and life within the controversial Anhaltezentrum (detention centre), then one aim is to use the devices of theatre to investigate the many different aspects of this project beyond media debates. In the light of this beautiful prison, that is not in fact a prison at all, the Graz-based company tells a story of entrepreneurship in its most original form: someone comes to the municipality and starts up an illicit distillery. A different mode of field research is promised by the **Nesterval** group, who invite visitors to take part in a kind of performative paper-chase around Vordernberg, a place steeped in history. Or Australian artist **Mikala Dwyer**, who makes her way through the town's mining heritage and the modern detention centre, thus creating a temporary place of pilgrimage. **Anna Peschke**, in turn, creates a space for people to stay a while in the historic "Raithaus", the original seat of the Montanuniversität – a wishful internal world full of plants and grasses.

In Leoben, visual artist **Ulla von Brandenburg** transforms the Porubsky Halle, a former coal

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stockyard, into a hybrid art space, that is programmed by local and international artists throughout the duration of the festival. By British artist **Ant Hampton** and his "Etiquette" project, by artists featuring at the herbst exhibition (thus building a bridge to Graz) and also by the **herbst conference** that, themed around "Future Perfect", stops off here for one day to interrogate our present as a future past. Also on the programme is a "think tank" about the Porubsky Halle itself and its future use, a clothing swap, a poetry slam by the local scene, and an evening of retro cinema. This Upper Styrian herbst base opens with a concert by **Der Nino aus Wien** on 27 September. In Leoben, Graz and Vordernberg the artist collective **Fourdummies** are on the road with the herbst vehicle, collecting and recording future visions of festival visitors, to be stored in a time capsule for twenty years.

The visual arts programme also focuses on the view of artistic heritage. **Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien**, for instance, stages a retrospective of the work of Jörg Schlick, a colourful and central figure of visual art in Graz, whose traces still feature in the work of later generations of artists. The examination of the subject of inheritance is a very different one at Kunstverein **<rotor>**, with an exhibition taking a look at the link between political power and respective national historiography and possible alternative drafts: "That's not my history!". Examining historical ruptures in order to critically reappraise cultural legacy is also the theme of **Camera Austria** in "To What End?".

When and where is there time and room in public space for play – and for whom? Against the background of neoliberal urban development, also in Graz, the "Spielräume" show at **Haus der Architektur** examines this question, while **Kunsthau Graz** stages Chinese artist Xu Zhen's "Corporate" show. **Grazer Kunstverein** is presenting Canadian artist, publisher and healer AA Bronson and the legacy of shamanistic traditions in a joint major project, while **Forum Stadtpark** focuses on "Speech Acts" – speaking as political action. Legacies and the process of inheritance is also the subject under discussion at **Schaumbad – Freies Atelierhaus Graz** in "Heritage", at **Kulturzentrum bei den Minoriten** in "Reliqte, Reloaded" on Christian image worlds today, or at **the smallest gallery – collaboration space**, where Maria Anwander is intervening in art history to bring about a feminist redistribution. New exhibition partners, **Funkhausgalerie** (ORF regional studio Styria) is presenting a project with artist Werner Reiterer and **Kunsthalle Graz** is showing a three-dimensional collage by Austrian artist Anita Witek. "What Remains" at **esc medien kunst labor**, finally, asks how our almost endless swathes of data will be discovered and interpreted in a distant future.

Argentinian theatre-maker **Mariano Pensotti** returns to the festival this year, bringing his own Grupo Marea company to Graz for the first time. In his latest piece, he combines stories about people caught up by their past: "When I come home, I'll be someone different". Jörg Albrecht and **copy & waste** sets up a concept store in the middle of Graz, with not only the aim of spotlighting the topic of gentrification, but also of allowing time travel so as to shape the city of tomorrow: "Knick-Knack to the Future – Ruckzuck in die Zukunft". "Suite n°2" by French theatre-maker **Joris Lacoste** and "Tiny Guy" by Icelandic artist **Friðgeir Einarsson** are also premièring in the German-speaking world.

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"Future Vintage" – **ORF musikprotokoll** as well takes a look back and forward this year, for example as part of a series of vintage concerts featuring numerous electroacoustic rarities from past decades and a huge array of historical loudspeakers. Or as part of "Nixe", a series of new sound installations on the Murinsel and Lesliehof at Joanneumsviertel paying tribute to Ludwig Salvator, a connoisseur of the art of living and a researcher of the Mediterranean. Additionally musikprotokoll features a host of acts developed as part of SHAPE – Sound, Heterogeneous Art and Performance in Europe, a newly established platform for exchanging new and exciting projects in the realm of music and audiovisual art.

The latest piece by Belgian artist **Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker** and her Rosas company rounds off this year's festival. De Keersmaecker is one of the most influential choreographers of our time – this year she not only received the "Austrian Cross of the Order of Merit for Science and Art", but also the Golden Lion in Venice for her life's work. "Golden Hours (As You Like It)" – Brian Eno and William Shakespeare inspired her to explore the phenomenon of transience in this project, that marks the end of steirischer herbst 2015 – a festival replete with (world) premières, laboratories, processes and experiments in all genres of art.

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