

Press release, 12.10.18

steirischer herbst '18 – Résumé

On Sunday, 14.10., after almost four weeks of screenings, readings, concerts, performances, discussions, and installations, steirischer herbst '18 opens its doors to the public one last time.

The core program of this year's steirischer herbst, called *Volksfronten*, explored the multiple meanings of this notion through what could be understood and experienced as a single expanded exhibition spread out over 25 venues in Graz. The exhibition had both installative and performative elements, as well as symposia and panel discussions—all specific to the larger parcours in time and space.

There was a decisive focus on the city's locality, shaped and overwritten by a troubling, partially repressed history. Most of the *Volksfronten* contributions were new commissions addressing urban and regional narratives, presenting a new way to inhabit the city's social spaces and be engrossed in the stories they might tell. Together they formed a larger, grander narrative, each of its parts interconnected both on the physical map of Graz and on the calendar of the festival.

So far over 45,000 visitors attended the *Volksfronten* parcours, as well as musikprotokoll and the Collateral Program. Many projects will continue to run even after the festival's official closing.

Festival experience

During the weeks of the festival, steirischer herbst conducted a visitor survey consisting of twelve questions to investigate how some of the changes in the festival structure, program, and visitor service resonated with the audience.

While 51 percent of the polled visitors were regular festival goers, 49 percent said they were either first-time visitors or had been visiting the festival quite irregularly in the past. 93 percent stated that they will visit again and 84 percent assessed the festival program as very good or good. A similar percentage especially appreciated the works in public space. These works sparked particular interest, which resulted in deep discussions with the mediators of the works in public space on a daily basis.

2,200 visitors seized the opportunity to visit the program with the new Festival Pass, which 65 percent of the survey participants rated as a very good or good addition to the steirischer herbst ticketing system. 54 percent spent more than two days visiting the programs. 86 percent of the polled visitors assessed the service at the Visitor and Press Center, the Office of

Open Questions, as well as the information materials as very good or good.

Almost 2,000 visitors joined the Public Program or one of the educational programs, guided tours, or workshops by steirischer herbst's education team. As Office of Open Questions it invited the visitors to experience the festival's diverse program based on 100 open questions.

International echo

Over 500 media representatives and professional visitors from Austria and 32 additional countries were accredited during the runtime; the international media coverage is unique in the 51-year history of the festival. Among those reporting were such prestigious publications as *The New York Times* (USA), *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia), *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany), *Libération* (France), *The Sunday Times* (UK), *BBC* (Russia), *ArtReview* (UK), *Athinorama* (Greece), *Deutschlandfunk* (Germany), *Momus* (Canada), *Open Magazine* (India), *Der Spiegel* (Germany), *Baseler Zeitung* (Schweiz), *Aliás* (Brazil), *Ocula* (Asia/Pacific Region), *The Telavivian* (Israel), *Delo* (Slovenia), *Metropolis M* (The Netherlands), and *Artforum* (USA).

A good share of these colleagues reported extensively on the festival for the very first time, triggering much debate and creating visibility for not only the festival itself and all participants and partners, but also for the province of Styria and the city of Graz. A complete list of articles about steirischer herbst '18 is available in the [press section of our website](#).

Publications

In addition to an extensive 250-page publication guiding visitors through the *Volksfronten* parcours and to the online [Vorherbst Magazine](#), which comprises a wealth of preparatory material and contextual information about steirischer herbst '18, the curatorial team published *Postcards from Graz*. The book presents some picture-perfect postcard views of venues in Graz, which at the same time contain dense and complicated histories. Such are the places that inspired some of the projects of *Volksfronten*. The booklet itself invites one to read between the lines of these stories and around these postcards from Graz. Another comprehensive publication on steirischer herbst '18 and its themes is planned for the spring of next year.

Final festival weekend

Before on Sunday, as the very last point of program, a finissage and an artist talk with Igor & Ivan Buharov take place at Volkshaus Graz (14.10., 16:00), two more highlights are on this weekend's agenda:

Michael Portnoy, *Touching on Everything* (2018)

12.10, 19:00, Orpheum

Michael Portnoy's new performance for steirischer herbst is based on fragments of the satirical play *All Things Touch All Other Things Eventually* by Yosef Birnheim. Whereas allegorical Jewish folk tales usually focus on the conflict between one or two figurative beings (happiness and wisdom,

falsehood and truth), Birnheim sought to stage an entire philosophical system of mutual relations of all ideas in his satirical play, with each of these ideas embodied by his actors and the stage props. When the play was discovered, only a third of it still existed. Portnoy reconstructed the missing parts, filtering out the essence and updating an almost impenetrable concentration of ideas.

Conchita vs. Gabalier – Austria between tradition and modernity

13.10., 19:00, Orpheum

National identity defines itself through territory, which in turn can be perceived as a body, says linguist Ruth Wodak. So what does this so-called national body look like in Austria? There are two different versions of this projection, and they are diametrically opposed to one another. On the one hand, there is Conchita, the Austrian Eurovision song contest winner with a beard, on the other is the *Volks-rock'n'roller* Andreas Gabalier. Extroverted openness and liberality face off against equally extroverted invocations of *Heimat* and tradition, both of them fictional to a large degree. Austria is going through a period of massive political, social, psychological, and medial change. Where is the alpine republic headed? Is it on its way to an illiberal democracy, aided by nostalgia for local custom?

With: Department of Ultimology, Olga Flor, Gerald Grosz, Monika Primas, Markus Rheindorf, Kathrin Stainer-Hämmerle, and Gerhild Steinbuch

Concept: Martin Behr,

Moderation: Colette M. Schmidt

steirischer herbst '19 takes place from 19 September to 13 October.

Press images are available in the [press section of our website](#).

If you have any questions or need further information, do not hesitate to contact us.

Best wishes,

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Visitor and Press Center
Volksgartenstraße 4-6, 8020 Graz
13.9.-14.10., 14:00-19:00