

steirischer herbst 24/09 – 17/10/2010
Masters, tricksters, bricoleurs
Virtuosity as a strategy for art and survival

"Masters, tricksters, bricoleurs – Virtuosity as a strategy for art and survival", the leitmotif of steirischer herbst 2010, plays with the many different aspects of virtuosity: as a skill with which to ennoble content with craftsmanship or to distract from what is really going on it is not only a trait of masters – it is also the main instrument of all pickpockets and thimblerriggers. The tax evader is as much a part of the ambivalent world of virtuosity as the bricoleur who builds things with whatever happens to be available. But reconciling work, life and social activities also requires a virtuosity in constantly juggling disparate demands, which for many people is no longer an exception, but rather an everyday state of emergency. So the spectrum of virtuosity at steirischer herbst 2010 is broad: the phenomenal virtuosity of **William Forsythe** and his dancers – who are featuring for the first time in Graz with "I don't believe in outer space" – is undisputed even by conventional standards, as is, for example, the virtuosity of pianist **Marino Formenti**, who will be living and playing at stadtmuseumgraz for eight days, twelve hours a day, thus exploring his limits. **Friedrich Kittler**, who is taking part in the **herbst conference** "Masters, tricksters, bricoleurs", is a paradigm of virtuosity of thought.

Composer **Bernhard Lang**, choreographer **Christine Gaigg**, media artist **Winfried Ritsch**, and stage designer **Philipp Harnoncourt** have joined forces for the opening production "Machine shop #1": twelve dancers in a close mutual dependency with twelve computer-controlled automaton-pianos – who is playing whom is no longer distinguishable. The collaboration between man and machine is also the focus of "Hello Hi There" by New York director **Annie Dorsen**: based on the famous TV discussion between the philosopher Michel Foucault and the linguist and activist Noam Chomsky in the 1970s, two specially developed chatbots perform a new text – improvised, as it were – live. Visitors to steirischer herbst two years ago already had the chance to marvel at the virtuoso beauty and, at the same time, uncanniness of the works of **Gisèle Vienne** in "Jerk". In her new piece, "This is how you will disappear", the artificially exaggerated naturalism of the stage – real forest, real fog, and a climate that floats from the stage into the auditorium – becomes an active protagonist. As in romantic paintings, it remains uncertain whether it drives the three human protagonists or, inversely, reflects their drives.

As nomadic as the festival is its centre, that finds a new site every year, settling there for a certain time – this time in Forum Stadtpark, designed by the young Austrian architecture collective **feld72**. You'll come across numerous virtuosos, masters and bricoleurs here during the festival – at club concerts, lectures, film evenings or simply at the bar. The "Casino of Tricks" by **geheimagentur** will also be setting up camp here for eight days. The Casino collects, trades and teaches tricks. Visitors can carry on with trickery, manipulate the exchange rate, multiply (or lose) the stake while playing trick roulette, in a trick battle, at the trickster's lectern or simply at the bar. Until the money is all gone. **Susanne Kudielka** and **Kaspar Wimberley** will be conducting a one-week field research project on the balcony of the festival centre; the project explores the goings-on around the fountain in the main park.

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This year, the second part of the **herbst exhibition** for public space curated by Sabine Breitwieser, "Utopia and Monument", looks into the "Virtuosity and the Public Sphere". How does art for public space expose itself to the gaze of others in a common space, which transfers, which interventions, but also which disappearance insists on sharing this common space? Ten artists and two university departments develop projects on this topic for public space in Graz. "Milk Drop Coronet" at **Camera Austria** brings together thirty artists who will be creating their own exhibition on the "Virtuosity of Thingness" in as many table-top showcases. The work of Swedish artist Matts Leiderstam at **Grazer Kunstverein** thrives on creating constant productive confusion in the canonical order of museums, collections, works of old masters from the history of art, discovering new aspects all the time, while the Linz-based art collective **qujOchÖ** examines the methods of those who exploit financial-capitalist interactions for their purposes and cheat the system in an ingenious and inscrutable manner – the tricksters of the international financial markets. The exhibition "Forbidden Love" at **Kunstverein Medienturm** examines television as a reactive, open process, as a space of battling for attention, (self-) presentation and affect that popularises the discourse on identity, gender and difference. **Kunsthaus Graz** is showcasing one of the most important Austrian artists: Franz West – a master, virtuoso and bricoleur in one. Visitors will also be able to discover some other virtuosos in their own special way, including Romanian illustrator Dan Perjovschi at the festival centre, Swiss artist San Keller at Romantik Parkhotel, Concha Jerez at **ESC im LABOR**, the Russian ensemble Kollektive Aktionen at **kultur.at** in Gleisdorf, and the two Icelanders Hrafnkell Sigurðsson and Egill Sæbjörnsson at **Pavelhaus** – and also in the Annen district, on which Kunstverein **<rotor>** will be focusing our attention once again. The Kunsthaus show "Robot dreams", finally, ventures once more to the boundaries of human dominance.

"Beastie", a project by the British performance duo **Lone Twin**, was inspired by children's imagination and stories: a unique join-in performance for children. At this year's steirischer herbst they take the plot into their own hands, develop their own stories, and explore the surroundings – for instance a shopping centre – with a special new friend, the monster "Beastie". A shopping centre – the Citypark in Graz – is also the scene of the death of a consumer staged by Theater im Bahnhof ("Death of a card-holder"). Argentinean director **Mariano Pensotti** focuses on the moments that we could – or should? – have lived. He asked authors from around the world for entries in his "Encyclopaedia of unlive life", joining these very different original contributions together to create a playful evening of theatre, bringing the unlive to life on the stage of the Schauspielhaus in Graz. The Italian film-makers **Zapruder**, finally, are masters of a theatrical cinema hand made down to the last detail. The situation of the projection room is always incorporated in the conception, its history of visual arts and theatre is always tangible.

musikprotokoll 2010 also operates on the boundaries of musical virtuosity, be it in Marino Formenti's radically sustained self-experiment, the instrumental mastery of the **Arditti Quartet**, **Klangforum Wien** or the **Vienna RSO**, the ostensible anti-virtuosity of **Klaus Lang** or the technique that thirty-five musicians have to learn to play a completely new kind of instrument: fourteen trumpets, fourteen trombones, seven tubas: Constantin Luser's "Molecular organ" in the courtyard of the substitute chemistry building at Graz University of Technology is a unique, playful and yet serious interactive tubular sculpture and, at the same time, a set of instruments

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for an entire brass band. The "Molecular organ" will be inaugurated with a commissioned composition by the young composer **Peter Jakober**.

On the final weekend of the festival, the Hungarian, Amsterdam-based theatre-maker **Edit Kaldor** brings five Chinese people on stage who do their best to open up, to communicate themselves to the audience. Their only language is Chinese, however. And yet they are convinced that this does not prevent an exchange with us. In his new piece "in their name", the young Austrian choreographer **Philipp Gehmacher** focuses on his own live movement material, on presence as a mode of showing and sharing: how can the three performers share their conditions, how do they become permeable for the audience, that is not divided off by a raised stage? Clearly setting themselves apart from the working structures of municipal theatre, the Berlin-based performance ensemble **Showcase Beat Le Mot** prefer to compare themselves to a band. With accustomed anarchical forcefulness, they venture to tackle a consciously pathos-laden act of creation: "C-O-M-M-U-N-E – Bloody May" is the third instalment of a quadrology dealing with failed revolutions. Showcase Beat Le Mot, along with **Jonathan Burrows** and **Matteo Fargion**, who will be featuring at the herbst conference with a performance lecture, or also the French performers, musicians and visual artists **Gaëtan Bulourde** and **Olivier Toulemonde** with their project "Not every object used to nail is a hammer", ingeniously and ironically refute the idea of virtuosity.

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