

# *Europe: Ancient Future*

23.4. – 15.8.2021

Press talk: 21.4.2021, 11:00 a.m.\*  
HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark

Jimmie Durham, Haris Epaminonda, Ira Goryainova, Renée Green,  
Franz Kapfer, Barbara Kapusta, Jutta Koether, Oliver Laric, Shahryar  
Nashat, Steven Parrino, Franco Vaccari, James Welling, Franz West

Catalog available

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\* Registration required

Everyone is talking about Europe. Nevertheless, a common Europe is getting started only slowly, and the voices against it are also getting louder. The particularistic interests of nation-states, economies, and bureaucracies are too deep-seated. Many people tend to recoil from changes and seem to prefer to rely on the familiar—however ossified the status quo might be. A shared future yet can only lie in an open, cosmopolitan approach in which every individual has a good relationship with local and international communities. The search for a critical balance between individual and group was already characteristic of Greek antiquity, in order to strengthen democracy on the basis of individual and universal freedoms and responsibilities. The extensive project *Europe: Ancient Future* formulates contemporary contributions to an urgently needed discussion in order to advance—out of a history projected into the future—a culturally and politically conceived Europe in the spirit of an *equality in difference*.

Currently, we lack approaches and ideas how Europe and its future can be read on good terms. Beyond the already sufficiently complex current situation and its stabilizing powers, the potentially new lies per se in a future that no one knows but that seems to refer increasingly to the past and its fictions. These might not be the worst choices; the goal is to reread them in the light of current developments and make them as productive as possible, and yet it may remain true for this *Old New World*: Power may give way to “other, good” images.

An interesting thought experiment asserts that “Modernism is our antiquity” (T. J. Clark in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (1999)). Yet one quickly forgets that the legacy of

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ideas of classical antiquity includes many utopian reflections and could contribute much to designing a future Europe. The beginnings of the idea of Europe refer back to the early democracies of ancient Greece and their consequences. For our exhibition, various forms of retro futurism are particularly important, that is to say, forms of the future that point back to the past: With recourse to ancient and sometimes mythological concepts, we want to contribute to an understanding of Europe, to step out of reflection on the status quo and design a possible future perfect. It is about designing a utopia that is conscious of its own past and always already refers to its past. *Europe: Ancient Future* is thus conceived as a thought experiment on transnational community life in the European realm. We would therefore like to concentrate on a Europe of diverse cultures and ideas, accept his historically complex initial situation, and look ahead in accordance with the mythological significance of the eponymous Phoenician princess of a “wide gaze.”

With reference to Aristotle’s reflections on politics and ethics, the American political scientist Danielle Allen formulates in her book *Politische Gleichheit* (Political Equality) (2020) a call for an updated version of democracy, a balanced coexistence of individuals in a society that transcends any thinking about a nation-state. Aristotle already emphasized an egalitarian approach to society, without putting the autonomy of the individual last. Allen’s concern is to develop a new understanding of political freedom and equality at whose center stands democratic participation and self-empowerment. She strives for a democratic reinforcement of the question of justice that thinks of difference without dominance on the basis of equal basic social and economic freedoms within a networked society.

Around a dozen renowned artists approach, in quite different and yet very specific ways, these wideranging themes, which for all their contradictions share an interest in a good interplay of individual and society, which has been repeatedly reformulated since antiquity and should be practiced with playful seriousness. This theatrical gesture is supported by its stage, which finds its nonplace or portal ante futurum in a building developed from late (Hellenistic) modernity that places with architecture, stories, and utopias: the *Temple of Europa* in Graz.

The exhibition *Europe: Ancient Future* works with stories and ideas from the perspectives of the invited artists, whose images and works refer to a past but shine on our present and its possible future.

In her multipart film project *Chapters*, the Cypriot artist Haris Epaminonda guides us through a performative round dance of archaic, almost ritual-seeming dances and arrangements that employ updated interpretations of borrowings from the ancient history of her native island and translate them into our present in order to lend them a specific figure and thereby enduring form. In his series *The Earth, the Temple and the Gods*, the American photographer James Welling works with the architecture of the Acropolis and the agora in Athens and uses digital and in part forgotten analogue technologies to breathe the color back into objects and sculptures that have faded over the course of time—color that not only “gets under their skin” but also awakens them to a new life.

Finally, the exhibition makes it possible to present *Epiphanie an Stühlen* (Epiphany on Chairs), one of Franz West’s sculptures that have not been very accessible since he passed away. The concept of the epiphany places with the ancient desire that gods become visible, whereby West, who was interested in Ludwig Wittgenstein, works playfully and outlandishly with a sculptural language game and ultimately causes a pink divinity to go viral.

*Europe: Ancient Future* opens up an artistic format that creates in-between spaces for exchange, discussions, and conversations. The curatorial setting results in a fragmentary viewing of different constructions that connect to the European reality, point ahead to conceivable futures, and open up potentially alternative histories of the idea of Europe. In order to capture and expand on this, an extensive supporting program is being offered with the participation of guest scholars and artists and a substantial publication is being prepared to accompany it.

In order to truly do justice to the idea of Europe, it has to remain mobile and be constantly renegotiated. It is time for a new *Song for Europe* (Roxy Music, *Stranded*, 1973).

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# Program

## *Europe: Ancient Future*

22.4.2021, 3:00–8:00 p.m., Soft Opening\*

\* Entry according to current health rules

## *In Dialogue with Antiquity: Models of Living Together in the Europe of the Future*

Eveline Krummen (Graz University), 29.4.2021, 6:00 p.m., Lecture

## *The Leaking Bodies*

Rana Farahani, Barbara Kapusta (artists, Vienna/Berlin), 6.5.2021, 6:00 p.m., Performance

## *South as a State of Mind*

Marina Fokidis (Kunsthalle Athena, Athens), 14.5.2021, 4:00 p.m., Talk

## *Medusa – Female Figures of Mythology and Their Contemporary Reception*

Linda Nolan & Chiara Sulprizio (Temple University, Rome; Vanderbilt University, Nashville),  
20.5.2021, 6:00 p.m., Lecture

## *Mimesis and the Myths of Europe*

Annetta Alexandridis & Verity Platt (Cornell University, Ithaca, New York),  
27.5.2021, 6:00 p.m., Lecture

## *In the Back the Ruins of Europe*

Franz Kapfer (artist, Vienna), 10.6.2021, 6:00 p.m., Performance

## *Politics and/or Culture – What Shapes Europe?*

Markus Prutsch (European Parliament, Senior Research), 17.6.2021, 6:00 p.m., Lecture

## *Art in Europe / European Art?*

Constanze Itzel (House of European History, Brussels), 1.7.2021, 6:00 p.m., Lecture

## *What remains*

Cevdet Ereğ (artist, Istanbul), 8.7.2021, 6:00 p.m., Lecture

## *European Visions*

Lars von Trier (Idea), 14.7.2021, 6:00 p.m., Cinema evening

## *Europe: Ancient Future*

Sandro Droschl (curator), 12.8.2021, 6:00 p.m., Catalog presentation

# Art Education

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All events will be organized online or on location according to current safety regulations. Please refer to our homepage for further details.

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*Temple of Europa*  
Graz, 2021



James Welling  
*Acropolis Museum. Karyatid,*  
2019  
UV Print on Dibond  
88.9 × 131.4 cm  
Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery,  
New York/Paris



Haris Epaminonda  
*Chapters, 2013*  
16mm transferred to digital, single  
screen version  
97 min.  
Sound: Part Wild Horses Mane On  
Both Sides  
Courtesy the artist and Galleria  
Massimo Minini, Brescia; Casey  
Kaplan, New York; Rodeo, London/  
Piraeus



Barbara Kapusta  
*Leaking Body, 2020*  
Red clay, transparent glaze, platinum  
lustre  
34 × 22.5 × 10.5 cm  
Courtesy Gianni Manhattan, Vienna



Franz West  
*Epiphanie an Stühlen, 2011*  
Sculpture: steel, PU foam, gauze,  
dispersion paint  
Chairs: steel, wood, bamboo, linen  
Installation, variable dimensions  
© Archiv Franz West, © Estate Franz  
West, photo: Michaela Obermair;  
Courtesy: Franz West Privatstiftung,  
Vienna



Shahryar Nashat  
*Mother on Wheels (Nero*  
*Marquina 2), 2016*  
Marble, powder-coated steel, and  
castor wheels  
88 × 58 × 48 cm  
Courtesy the artist, RODEO, London/  
Piraeus

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