

ALLES KATASTROPHE!

Stages

Martin Zehetgruber



⑥ VERLUSTANZEIGE



- FINDEN VERLORENES
- SCHAFFEN ORDNUNG
- ZIEHEN KLEIDER AN



**ALLES KATASTROPHE !**

Stages

Martin Zehetgruber

Edited by

Judith Gerstenberg

Theater der Zeit







Judith Gerstenberg and  
Stefanie Wagner during  
preparatory discussions  
for this book  
Vienna 30/06/2022





Stories, at best.



## Contents

- 012 Visual memories  
Judith Gerstenberg
- 042 My friend Martin  
A conversation with Martin Kušej on shared beginnings in Graz
- 078 Shine or die  
Andreas Schlager
- 098 The impossible and the unfathomable  
Heide Kastler
- 108 Compromise? Never.  
A conversation with Klaus von Schwerin
- 116 On the road to Utopia with Peer Gynt  
On the Kresnik / Zehetgruber team  
Christoph Klimke
- 122 Artistic encounter  
On the collaboration with lighting designer Alexander Koppelman  
Judith Gerstenberg
- 168 I always felt like his spaces had their own life stories  
Nicholas Ofczarek
- 200 The spaces became images, the images began to flow, the flow became music  
Georg Nigl
- 234 Homeless bodies, homeless sound  
Barbara Frey
- 246 The Ludwigsburg Stage Tower  
A conversation with Elisabeth Schweeger
- 254 Résumé, Works, Awards
- 268 Profiles
- 272 Acknowledgements, Image credits, Credits

Visual memories

Judith Gerstenberg

## Alles Katastrophe!

### **BLACKOUT**

"Excuse me? - What kind of a title is that?" I am confused, and I give full voice to my displeasure. It is our first meeting for this book which is to present his set designs. Martin Zehetgruber looks at me, laughs, shrugs his shoulders: "Alles Walzer?" I wait in vain for a more detailed explanation. I consult my Austrian-German dictionary and I'm soon enmeshed in the cultural history of his homeland. "Alles Walzer!" - "Everybody waltz!" The annual command issued at the Vienna Opera Ball each year, the stiffness of studiously rehearsed bows from "the twirling tumult of the waltzing crowd", is a cultural event viewed with suspicion beyond Austria's borders - and it comes with a history. I read on about the profound intellectual upheavals that distinguish the origin story of this society dance, about revolutions, political uncertainties and about how the waltz "represents both an early manifestation of individualism and a collective escape to the ecstasy of dance" which the couples attain through incessant circular motion. I replace "Walzer" with "Katastrophe", leaf through Zehetgruber's image archive, and I understand.

### **BLACKOUT**

Stories, at best. The subtitle. Martin Zehetgruber only supplies fragments. Flashes. Images that leave an after-impression on the retina. Connecting the pieces, the narrative, is something he leaves up to others. To me. To the audience.

### **BLACKOUT**

Memories. No depictions. No templates. No real spaces. Remnants of impressions deposited in the memory - in his, in society's. Situations, images, texts, encounters seized emotively. They pile up, forming a slag heap in his mind. This is where the designs for his sets originate. Spontaneously. He sketches them in writing. Only later does he research, seek substantiation for his intuition, consult materials from art and literature.

### **BLACKOUT**

Childhood landscape, Donawitz. Styria. To be more precise: Upper Styria. That's where he grew up. His first years. The snow: red. In the child's memory. The local steel works had no filter system at the time. Sulphur dioxide. Fine dust. Graphite rain. Filth everywhere. Maybe it was algae that dyed the snow. A phenomenon at higher altitudes, including the Alps; they call it "blood snow". An omen of misfortune - at least that's what those who don't subscribe to the scientific explanation believe.

### **BLACKOUT**

Voestalpine Stahl Donawitz. Europe's largest contiguous steelworks at the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The smelting works dominated the region. It was destroyed in the Second World War. Following post-war reconstruction, his father

managed the engineering office. It is renowned for its innovations in heavy industry, but is nonetheless doomed to extinction.

#### **BLACKOUT**

The discharge. The opening of the blast furnace vent. Illumination of the area that recurs regularly, bright as day in darkness. Slag. The liquid iron ore. Glowing bright red. Rain. The steam. The heat. The force. Overwhelming. Water for cooling. This is the most dangerous work in the smelting works. A surreal image. Apocalyptic.

#### **BLACKOUT**

His brother falls ill. Lungs. The family moves to nearby Trofaiach. A town for the better-off, which markets itself as "Styria's liveable town". The promise of clean air. A little street train. A big house for the family. A primary school. Apart from that - nothing.

#### **BLACKOUT**

Dead-end valley. "When you drive in, you have to drive out the same way." This is where Zehetgruber lives until he is fourteen. He has never travelled anywhere else. The Erzberg looms at the end of the valley. Imposing nature, subject to violence at the hands of humanity for centuries. Visible. Exploding. Bursting open. Penetrating. Extracting. Exploiting. The wounds mark the landscape.

#### **BLACKOUT**

Drilling. Dynamite. Sledge hammer and iron. Holes. Fissures. Tunnels. An underground realm. Extraction below the earth. For centuries. Later: large-scale open-cut mining. Stepped. Like terraces. Each has its own name. A mountain becomes a pyramid. Nature becomes culture. On the surface. Hubris, violence, work, misery are concealed below.

#### **BLACKOUT**

The myth of the water man. "According to the myth, the discovery of iron deposits on the Erzberg is attributed to the wisdom of a water man. He lived in a grotto to the north-west of Eisenerz and was caught by the residents near the Leopoldsteiner lake with the help of a cloak soaked in pitch. To buy his freedom, he offered 'gold for a year', 'silver for a hundred years' or 'iron for evermore'. The wily Eisenerzers chose the latter, and the water man showed them the Erzberg. Once they had seen the iron deposits for themselves, they released the water man, who disappeared into a karst spring." (roBerge.de, 15/06/2020)

#### **BLACKOUT**

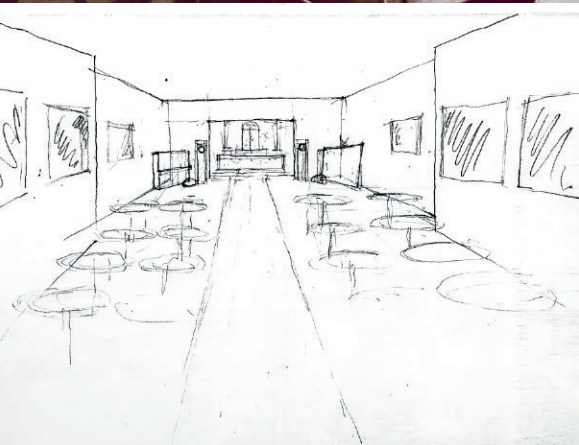
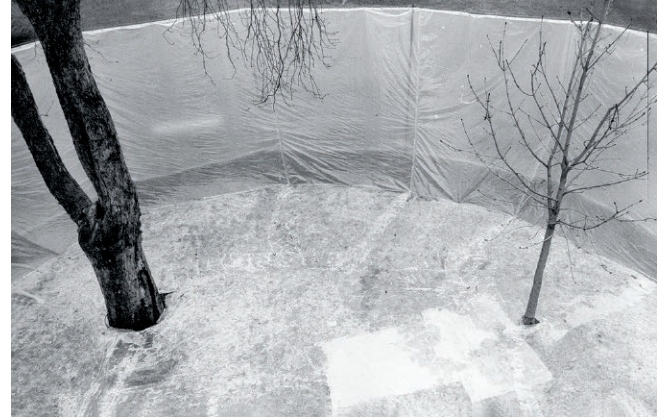
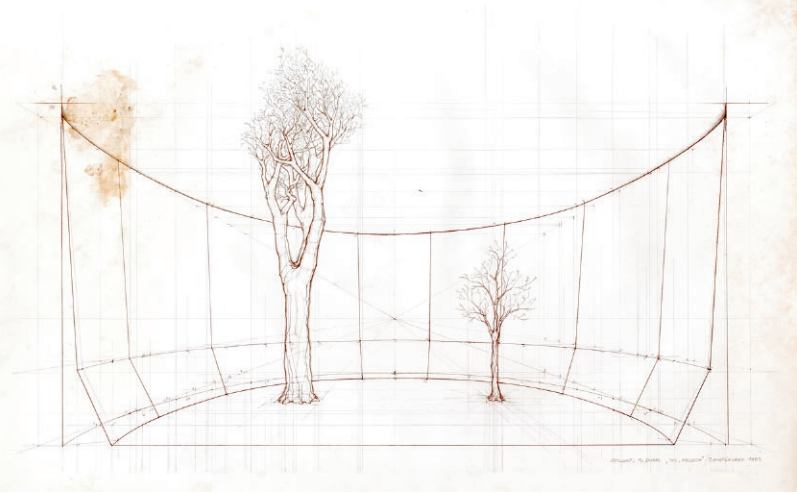
Structural change. Not even Donawitz was spared. "Evermore" is no more. Even infinity has its limits. Steel, rust. Decline. The demise of an entire region. Dispersing, remaining. It becomes a life-long motif that is inscribed in Zehetgruber's work.

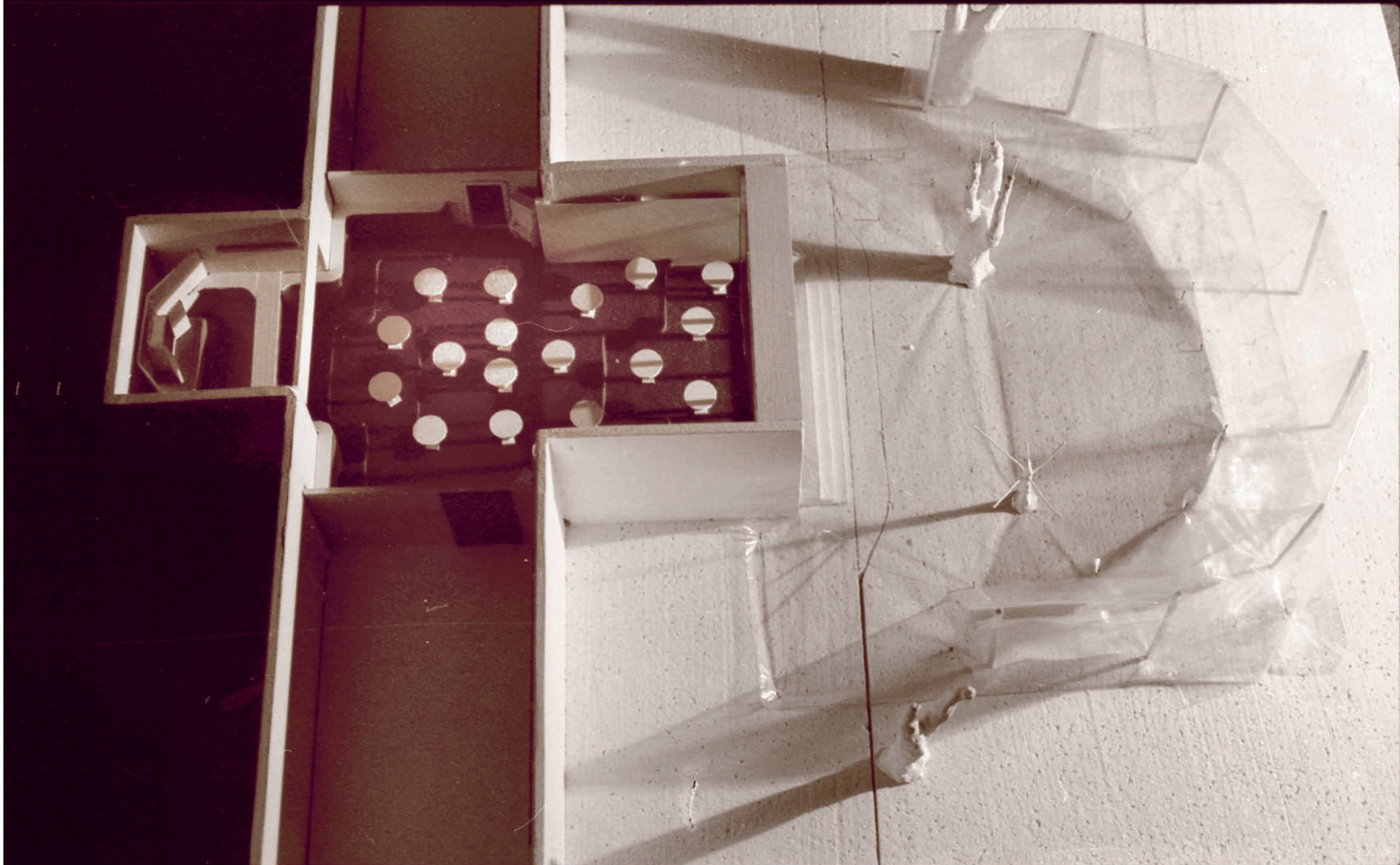


Works 1983 - 2022



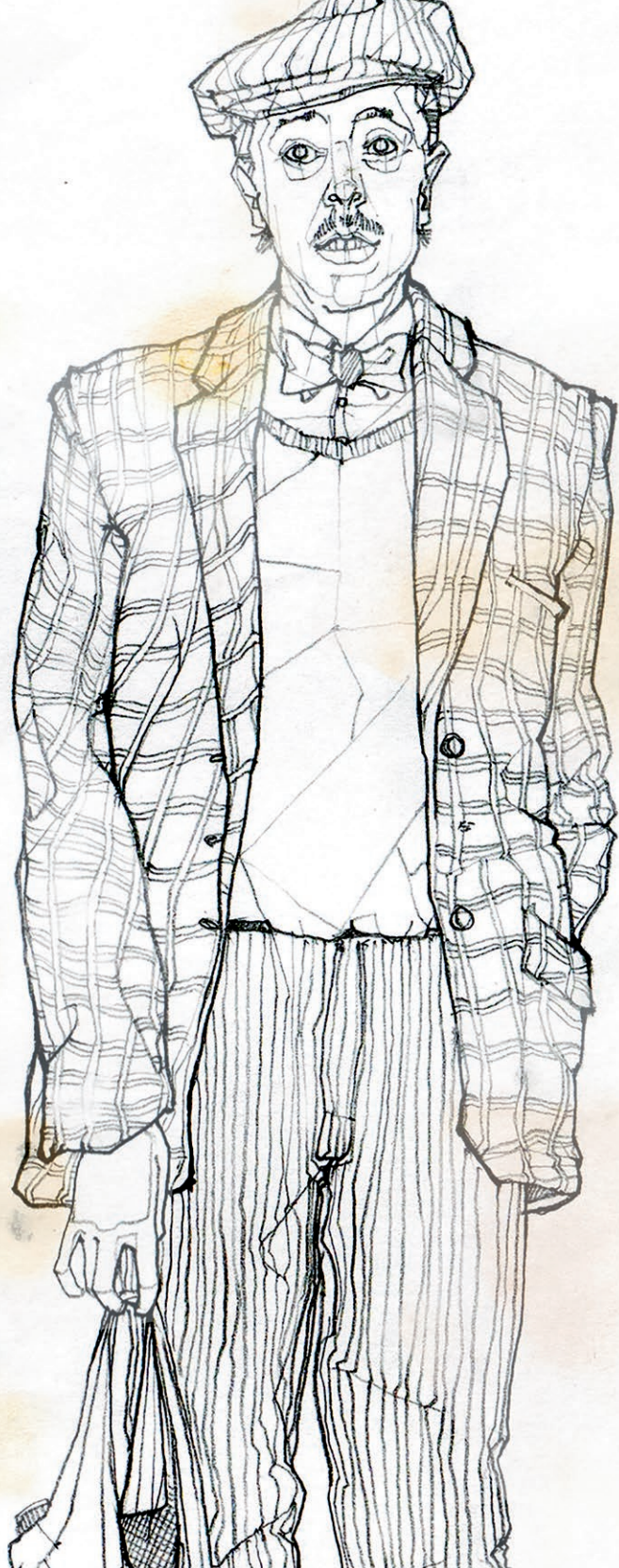






**Yes, Perhaps** by Marguerite Duras  
1983 Forum Stadtpark / Graz  
Director: Caroline Weber







Costume sketch

**The Curious Ones** by Carlo Manzoni  
**Der Boden 411 (Ground 411)**  
by Lutz Rathenow  
1986 independent production /  
Zurich  
Theatersaal Karl der Große  
Director: Caroline Weber







**Don Carlos** by Friedrich Schiller  
2004 Burgtheater Vienna  
Director: Andrea Breth  
Costumes: Françoise Clavel



**Erster Akt.**



*Der königliche Garten in Aranjuez.*

**I. Akt  
Erster Auftritt.**

*Carlos allein.  
Domingo kommt hinzu*

Goldraum offen / leer bis auf Fliegenfänger / Carlos liegt halb verdeckt vom Vorhang am Boden /spricht liegend mit Domingo

**BLACK**



**I. Akt  
Zweiter Auftritt.**

*Carlos. Marquis von Posa*

Goldraum zu / Carlos, Posa vor dem Vorhang

Umbau über Tische.  
  
Dazu: 15 Fauteuils / 1 Fernseher mit Videorekorder

**BLACK**



Die Hofhaltung der Königin in Aranjuez. Eine einfache ländliche Gegend.

**I. Akt  
Dritter Auftritt.**

*Die Königin. Die Herzogin von Olivarez. Die Prinzessin von Eboli und die Marquisin von Mondecar.*

Goldraum offen / Fliegenfänger / 15 Fauteuils mit Aschenbecher in der Lehne, weiß-beige mit dem Rücken zum Publikum / Fernseher auf Schrank, Meeresbrandung / Damen lesen Hochglanzzeitschriften



**I. Akt  
Vierter Auftritt.**

*dazu Marquis von Posa.*

Gleich wie I/3 Vorhang links od. rechts weiter herein gezogen (wann?), dahinter ab der Damen, dann kommt Carlos vor



**I. Akt  
Fünfter Auftritt.**

*Die Königin. Carlos. Marquis von Posa und die Marquisin von Mondecar treten nach dem Hintergrunde zurück.*

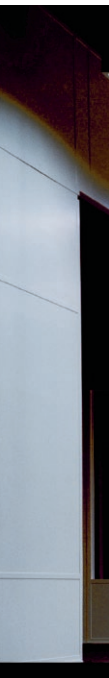
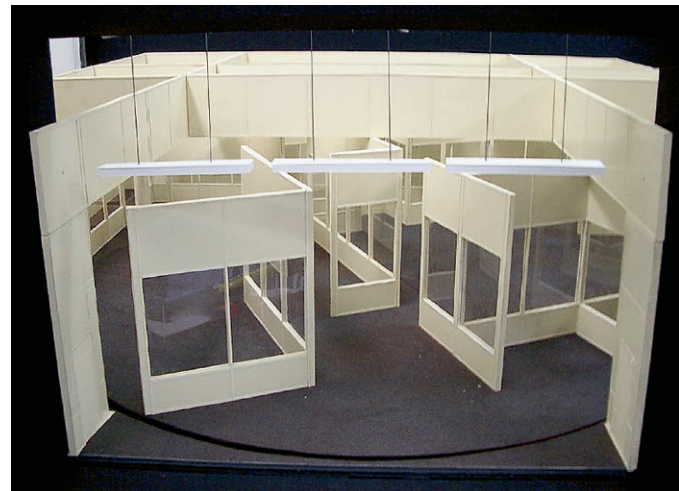
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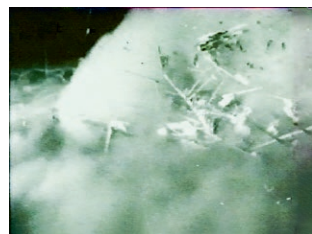
**I. Akt  
Sechster Auftritt.**

*König. Königin. Herzog Alba. Graf Lerma. Domingo. Einige Damen und Granden, welche in der Entfernung zurückbleiben*

**BLACK**











**Das weite Land  
(The Vast Domain)**

by Arthur Schnitzler

2022 co-production

Ruhrtriennale

(Jahrhunderthalle Bochum) /

Akademietheater Vienna

Director: Barbara Frey

Costumes: Esther Geremus

Stage design collaboration:

Stefanie Wagner



The Ludwigsburg Stage Tower

A conversation with Elisabeth Schweeger

At a time when theatres were closing throughout Germany, the state of Baden-Württemberg succeeded in opening a theatre academy in Ludwigsburg complete with a new theatre building - designed by Martin Zehetgruber. A campus gradually emerged in its vicinity and now - along with the Film Academy that was already on the site, the Animation Institute and the Franco-German film studio - it also hosts three degree courses for the performing arts: acting, direction and dramaturgy. When you took over direction of the Academy in 2014, the institution had been running for seven years and had already experienced a change in management. Under your direction it developed into an outstanding place of training for interdisciplinary theatrical work. Can you describe the role that the building designed by Martin Zehetgruber assumed in this process?

It is indeed unusual for a state, in this case Baden-Württemberg, to create a new theatre building. You can attribute it to the innovative character of this higher education project, which also received political support. They recognised that the Film Academy needed a complement, after all film involves performance as well. So they wanted to bring film and theatrical arts together in one place and enter into close cooperations, including a cooperation with the State Academy of Fine Arts Stuttgart, which hosts the set and costume design degree courses, where Martin Zehetgruber was appointed Professor.

Martin's stage tower opened in 2008, and with it he created something that astonished me when I first took on this role, and made me realise the possibilities he had thought through. He conceived a building that creates a dialogue with the exterior. So in the tower you have a traditional theatre space with a proscenium arch, where the audience is on one side and the stage on the other, but you can also completely open the space on three sides with large roller doors to reveal the outside world. This brings the city into the theatre and, conversely, the theatre into the city. This idea of opening up is vital for a training centre that is dedicated to the theatrical. We have a duty to reflect and explore where the theatrical arts are headed. Our traditional understanding, which is still rooted in the 19th century, was shaken up some time ago. The circumstances of society have changed and are changing every day, so theatres need to respond to them. You can see this both in the themes that are addressed and in how literature is dealt with in the performative context today. The performing arts are becoming increasingly transdisciplinary. They mix up numerous expressive forms of artistic creativity, and that's something Zehetgruber's basic space invites you to do in many different ways.

Both the inside and the outside of the stage tower can be used for performance. Galleries run around the facade, even the roof can be used as a stage.

Yes, the whole place is designed to inspire dialogue with the city; through the permeability of interior and exterior, through the option of addressing the square from above. In his conception, Martin had already thought of something that has proven to be absolutely vital: the option of leaving the elevated, bourgeois site of the theatre behind and examining the relationship between



Résumé

Works

Awards

## Résumé

**1961**

Birth in Styria, Austria



Donawitz steelworks, railway station

**1979**

Death of his father



Donawitz steelworks, canteen

**1981 - 1986**

Set design studies at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, graduation with distinction. Throughout this time, assistance on a number of Styrian state exhibitions and at the steirischer herbst festival

**1988**

Civilian service

**1989**

Founding of the production cooperative My friend Martin with Martin Kušej

**1990**

Presentation of the mobile audience container from "Tode" at Technova International in Graz

**1993**

Permanent engagement at Schauspiel Stuttgart until 2001

**1996**

Marriage to Susanne Weckerle, birth of son Jasper, move to Germany

**1999**

Birth of daughter Celia

**2001**

Appointment to professorship of the set design department of the State Academy of Fine Arts Stuttgart

Design of the "Stage Tower" and conceptual guidance in the planning phase of the Academy of Performing Arts Baden-Württemberg in Ludwigsburg up to its foundation

**2002**

Death of his brother

**2004**

Beginning of collaboration with Stefanie Wagner

**2013**

Divorce

**2015**

Marriage to Stefanie Wagner

**2017**

Death of his mother



## Works

### 1983

"Act without Words" by Samuel Beckett in the former tavern Der Wilde Mann, Graz, Director: Caroline Weber

"Yes, Perhaps" by Marguerite Duras, Forum Stadtpark, Graz, Director: Caroline Weber



Director Caroline Weber



Martin Zehetgruber

### 1986

"The Curious Ones" by Carlo Manzoni and "Boden 411" ("Ground 411") by Lutz Rathenow, independent production, Zurich, Director: Caroline Weber

### 1987

"Judith" by Kurt Franz, klagenfurter ensemble, Director: Martin Kušej

"Es" ("It") by Karl Schönherr, Schauspielhaus Graz, Director: Martin Kušej

"Happy Baby, wir spielen nur es tut nicht weh" ("Happy Baby, We're Just Playing It Doesn't Hurt") by Matjaž Grilj, steirischer herbst Graz, Director: Edward Müller

### 1988

"Der Untergang der Titanic" ("The Sinking of the Titanic") by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Schauspielhaus Graz, Director: Martin Kušej

### 1989

"Schneewittchen" ("Snow White") by Robert Walser, independent production, Schlachthof Graz, Director: Caroline Weber

### 1990

"Glaube Liebe Hoffnung" ("Faith, Hope, and Charity") by Ödön von Horváth, Slovenian National Theatre Ljubljana, Director: Martin Kušej

"Szenen aus dem Bleistiftgebiet" ("Scenes from the Pencil Zone") by Robert Walser, independent production, Biel and Basel, Director: Caroline Weber

"The Trio in E Minor" by Eric Rohmer, Theater Winkelwiese Zurich, Director: Caroline Weber

"Wie es ist" ("How It is"), montage of "Sturmpatruill" ("Storm Patrol") by Arnolt Bronnen and "Die Humanisten" ("The Humanists") by Ernst Jandl, klagenfurter ensemble, Director: Martin Kušej

"Philoktet" ("Philoctetes") by Heiner Müller, Jura Soyfer Theater Vienna, Director: Martin Kušej

"Tode" ("Deaths") by My friend Martin, Messeparkplatz Graz, Director: Martin Kušej

"Mobiler Himmel" ("Mobile Heaven") by My friend Martin, steirischer herbst Graz, Director: Martin Kušej

### 1991

"Pohujšanje" by Ivan Cankar, Slovensko Mladinsko Gledališče Ljubljana, Director: Martin Kušej  
- rehearsals cancelled due to outbreak of civil war in Yugoslavia

"Tage des Königs" ("Days of the King") by Peter Rosei, Schauspielhaus Graz, Director: Martin Kušej



Director Martin Kušej



### 1992

"Der Traum ein Leben" ("A Dream is Life") by Franz Grillparzer, Schauspielhaus Graz, Director: Martin Kušej

"Romeo and Juliet" by Sergei Prokofiev, Opernhaus Graz, Director: Heinz Spoerli

"Mesalliance/aber wir ficken uns prächtig" ("Mésalliance/but we fuck brilliantly") by Werner Schwab, steirischer herbst Graz, Director: Marc Günther

"Franz Falsch F Falsch Dein Falsch Nichts Mehr Stille Tiefer Wald" ("Franz Wrong, F Wrong, Yours Wrong Nothing More, Calm, Deep Forest") by My friend Martin, Mittelfest Cividale, Italy, Director: Martin Kušej

"Irrlichter - Schrittmacher" ("Will o' the Wisps - Pacemakers") by Thomas Strittmatter, Residenztheater Munich (Marstall), Director: Martin Kušej

### 1993

"Kabale und Liebe" ("Intrigue and Love") by Friedrich Schiller, co-production of Stadttheater Klagenfurt/Schauspiel Stuttgart, Director: Martin Kušej

"Herzog Theodor von Gothland" ("Duke Theodor von Gothland") by Christian Dietrich Grabbe, Schauspiel Stuttgart, Director: Martin Kušej

### 1994

"Kill Pig Devil Passion Finish God" by Martin Kušej, co-production of Schauspielhaus Graz/Ballett Graz/Vienna Festival/Tanz 94, Director: Martin Kušej

"Prinz Friedrich von Homburg" ("The Prince of Homburg") by Heinrich von Kleist, Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg, Director: Martin Kušej



Martin Zehetgruber  
"Z 1994", figure by stage designer Bettina Meyer

"Straßenecke. Ein Ort. Eine Handlung" ("Street Corner. A Location. An Action") by Hans Henny Jahn, Schauspiel Stuttgart, Director: Martin Kušej



Actor Andreas Schlager in "Straßenecke" by Hans Henny Jahn

### 1995

"Die Unbekannte aus der Seine" ("The Unknown Woman from the Seine") by Ödön von Horváth, Schauspiel Stuttgart, Director: Martin Kušej

"Clavigo" by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Schauspiel Stuttgart, Director: Martin Kušej

"Pension Schölller" by Carl Lauf and Wilhelm Jacoby, Schauspielhaus Graz, Director: Marc Günther

"Maria Magdalena" by Friedrich Hebbel, Thalia Theater Hamburg, Director: Amélie Niermeyer

### 1996

"King Arthur" by Henry Purcell and John Dryden, co-production of Staatsoper Stuttgart/Schauspiel Stuttgart/Stuttgarter Ballett/Conductor: Alan Hacker, Director: Martin Kušej

"Richard III" by William Shakespeare, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz Berlin, Director: Martin Kušej

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" by William Shakespeare, Schauspielhaus Graz, Director: Marc Günther

"Die Jungfrau von Orleans" ("The Maid of Orleans") by Friedrich Schiller, Nationaltheater Mannheim, Director: Bruno Klimek





Martin Zehetgruber and Stefanie Wagner / 2017 Naples / in preparation for "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk" at the Teatro San Carlo



Netsuke "Ashinaga and Tenaga" / Ivory / Edo period, c. 1810

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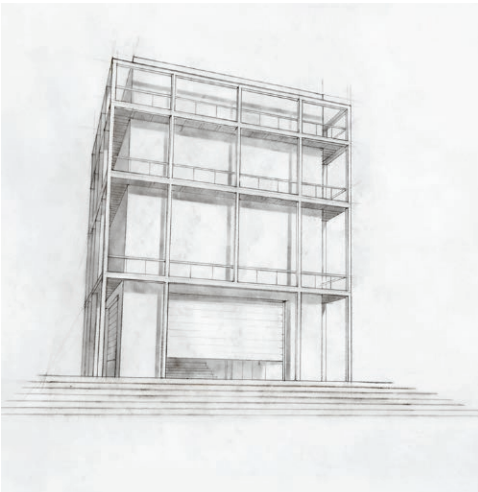
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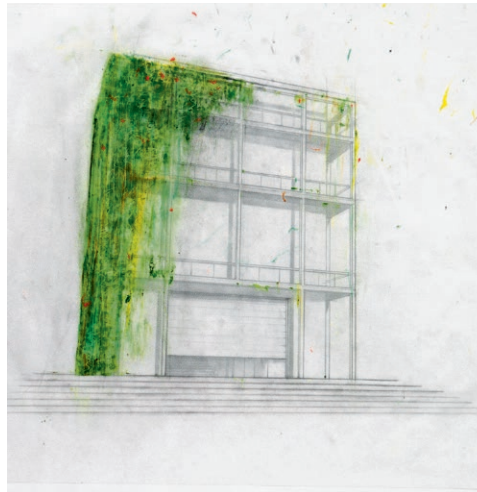
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ALLES KATASTROPHE!

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Martin Zehetgruber

Edited by Judith Gerstenberg

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