

**ALFREDO BARSUGLIA**

.....  
*selected documentation of recent works*

born 1980 in Graz  
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**Alfredo Barsuglia's** artistic work is extremely diverse in terms of both content and form. He works across media and genres, creating paintings, drawings, objects, performances, videos, and spatial interventions. From hyper-realistic paintings, sculptures, alienated found objects from nature as well as from the everyday world and industry, he creates expansive poetic-irritating installations that often also involve the visitors in a participatory act in the theatrical events.

A fine feeling for materialities and a subtle use of language in the form of pointed titles characterize the artist, who works his projects aesthetically and realizes them with technical skill. In his works he questions the perception and design of private and public spaces, autonomy and heteronomy, dependencies and anarchistic desire for freedom.

In many cases, Barsuglia's spatial stagings tell of the thin line between illusion and reality, in which it can happen that the roles of the self and the other are exchanged. A "trickster" and "drifter" and "renegade" who feigns longing, who installs a swimming pool in the Mojave Desert for luxurious entertainment, and

places a cottage for free overnight stays in the center of Innsbruck, who creates an island "Mariainsele" as a new hot spot in Fürstfeld, who moves entire street facades into museum space, and who, in a complicity, offers whimsical guest rooms, including dinner, in Eisenstadt in Burgenland. None of this could be more real, nothing could seem more unsettling and irritating, more absurd and yet more fascinating.

Again and again, the viewer is included in his game, directly confronted or motivated to action in which Barsuglia playfully invites to question possible life designs and systemic structures.

"The research on local conditions and also the physical confrontation with the geographical, social and societal parameters of a situation usually precedes my actual work. Once I have grasped what I consider to be the essential feature of a task, I make its opposite the content of the work. Making the opposite visible is a way I often practice to approach a subject objectively. This approach, the method of inversion, is known in the philosophy of science as the hermeneutic circle," explains the artist.

## FORMA, 2021

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together with Veronika Dirnhofer, Kunstraum flat1, Vienna,  
12.02. – 17.02.2021

In their joint show at Kunstraum flat1, Alfredo Barsuglia and Veronika Dirnhofer present small sculptures and objects made of different materials. Due to the positioning of the individual works in the exhibition space, they react to each other and enter into connections to form like an organic plant. *Forma* experiments with formless form, materiality as form and connection as form.





## SUAHTSNUK, 2021

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Kunsthhaus Graz, 09.04. – 09.10.2021

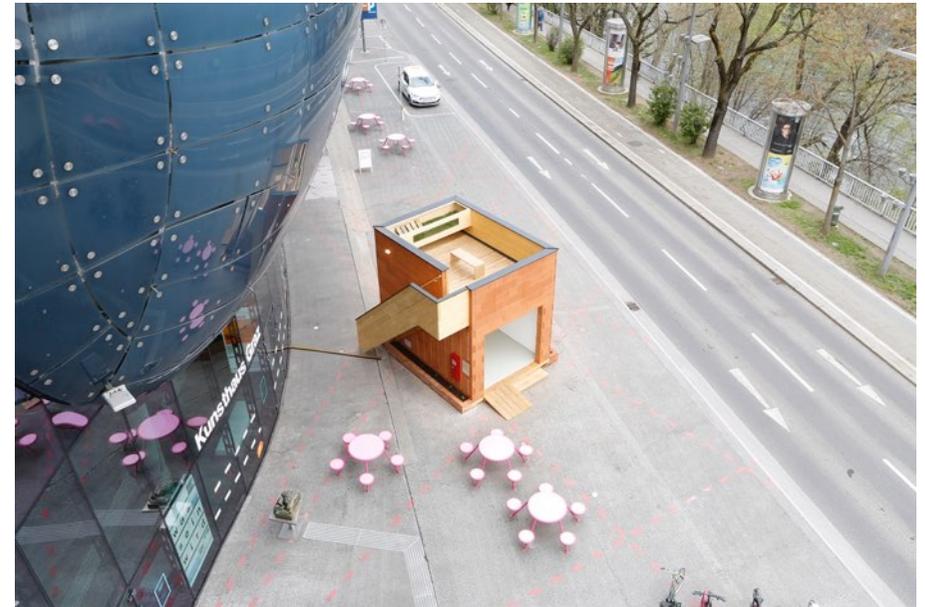
[www.suahtsnuk.at](http://www.suahtsnuk.at)

Graz-born artist Alfredo Barsuglia (\*1980) realizes the art project *Suahtsnuk* in collaboration with Kunsthhaus Graz as part of *Showing Styria: what will be. Towards a Plurality of Futures*. *Suahtsnuk* – Kunsthhaus read backwards – is urban sculpture and experimental art space at the same time. As „the other alien“ it is situated in front of Kunsthhaus Graz, the so-called „friendly alien“, and is always open and freely accessible when Kunsthhaus Graz is closed. The interior space is used for exhibitions, for which national as well as international artists and artist groups from the field of visual arts can apply. There are open calls every three weeks. The time of receipt of the application is the selection criterion: first come, first served. Openings are every third Monday at 6 p.m., the exhibition period is 20 days each time.

On the accessible, partly greened flat roof there is a vine snail breeding, which can be visited during the day. For those interested, there is the possibility to take care of the 200 snails for a few weeks in order to become familiar with them.

Alfredo Barsuglia's multifaceted works deal with artistically and socio-politically relevant topics such as economy and ecology, our interaction

with nature and the function of art and culture. The artist designs alternative spaces that he places in public space and thus in our everyday life as artistically usable foreign bodies that briefly interrupt our habitual perception. In this sense, *Suahtsnuk* can be seen as thought-provoking impulse about future scenarios of art institutions.









## THE OUTER SPACE, 2021

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Galerie Zimmermann Kratochwill, Graz, 15.01. – 06.03.2021

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytoPrNUUsIU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytoPrNUUsIU)

In the exhibition *The Outer Space* Alfredo Barsuglia presents a new sculptural series of works with the help of mainly abstract, large-scale sculptures made of Styrodur, plaster, lacquer, luminous bodies, sound and pneumatic materials, which are processed in such a way that their materiality is not recognizable. The focus is on perceptual processes of spaces and senses, of time and materiality, of analog and digital realities.

In a world that oscillates between reality, fake news and augmented reality, it requires the willingness of each individual to question circumstances in order to be able to approach the truth. *The Outer Space* invites us to take a look behind the facades and attempts to move away from the world.







**THE ARTIST IS ALWAYS PRESENT, 2020**

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Parallel Vienna, artist statement, 22. – 27.9.2020

The artist Alfredo Barsuglia will be present at the Parallel Vienna art fair for one week via videophone.

The head of the life-size doll, which is leaning casually against a radiator, is a tablet with the artist's face on its display. The artist is thus only digitally on site. Physically, he is on the move: at home, in the studio, on his bicycle, on an excursion.

He has the opportunity to be in two places at the same time and to speak to the many fair visitors without a face mask and corona distance rule.





## **DAS WUNDER, 2020**

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Kulturdrogerie Vienna, 29.5. – 1.7.2020

Parallel Vienna, 22. – 27.9.2020

Konschthal Esch, Luxembourg, 3.10.2020 – 2022

In the first days of the lockdown due to the Corona pandemic, where only those people were allowed to leave their homes who had a system-related occupation or needed to buy groceries, road traffic was almost completely shut down. Only a few moving cars could be seen. This period of reduced traffic led Alfredo Barsuglia to think about mobility and its effects, and to create the project and to conceive the project *Das Wunder (The Miracle)*.

Cars represent mobility, freedom and social status, but also air pollution, noise and danger.

*Das Wunder* is a sculpture consisting of two passenger cars connected to each other at the floor plates and placed on a street parking lot in Vienna's 18th district. The vehicles of different brands with the same wheelbase lie on top of each other like a pair of copulating lovers.

As the wheels of one vehicle are removed, the vehicles seem to merge with each other. The vehicles have foreign license plates, which in times of the pandemic, where state border crossings were closed, the unity of Europe pointedly questioned.

The sculpture stands as a symbol for the standstill of man and economy alike. Although the vehicles are apparently functional, they are not usable, are out of order, a reminiscence. In the lockdown everything continues to be present and tangible, but unavailable: Playhouses and opera houses, playgrounds and sports facilities, schools and homes, neighbors and friends.

The world was upside down, sense and nonsense, trust and mistrust, security and insecurity were no longer distinguishable.





## FREMDENZIMMER, 2020

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together with Peter Sandbichler, Kunstverein Eisenstadt,  
08.06.– 30.08.2020

The two artists Alfredo Barsuglia and Peter Sandbichler have conceived an unusual adventure: In joint authorship, they built a spatial sculpture that functions as both a hotel room and a Wunderkammer.

The external setting is a cuboid that magically floats in the darkened room: composed of 82 folded and glued modules made out of used cardboards, its 730 × 333 × 283 cm barely stands out against the gray carpeted floor. The expansive body is a self-contained unit, an "illusion room" that integrates into the existing architecture of the Kunstverein. At the same time, its space-within-a-space constellation puts the outer skin itself on display. The geometric modules that curve inward lead to delightful, optical effects and give the sculpture the shape of a "spaceship" from which blue light seems to creep out.

The interior of this brown spaceship forms a wonderful little world of outlandishness. The centerpiece is a multifunctional design object that functions as a bed, table, bench and storage space. Material-poetic and often undefined objects present themselves on consoles protruding from the cardboard wall. Everything seems to be interconnected. Art,

science and technology intertwine to form microcosmic stories. Much of this space is reminiscent of a baroque "chamber of art and



curiosities," except that you can actually live in it: eat, drink, sleep, and dream for a night! The familiar but ambiguous title of the exhibition *Fremdenzimmer* (Stranger's Room or Guest Room) formulates opposing desires: to become acquainted with strange things and to banish the strange into a room.

At night, however, things will change in this "Wunderkammer". As if by magic, life is breathed into the objects and the overnight visitors can experience the confused facets of a nocturnal phantasmagoria. What seems so clear during the day shows its illogical, irrational reverse side

in the Saturday nights. Only the light of the next morning puts the real as well as the dreamed experiences of the night at a distance and they can hardly be distinguished from each other anymore. What remains is a possibly untidy bed, the remains of a nightly meal, a bottle of wine, a once again frozen scenery. The next day (it is a Sunday), these traces will be visible to the regular visitors as evidence of a past presence and will not be removed until the following Saturday, when the Kunstverein opens its doors again, so that the staging can begin anew. Unexpectedly, the overnight visitors become the performers of a two-person play: again a curious "cabinet piece".

Bookings are made at your own risk, participation is expressly encouraged.





## NICHTS, 2020

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Tiroler Künstler\*innenschaft, Kunstpavillon Innsbruck, 28.2. –  
21.6.2020

ALL IN NOTHING In some currents of Buddhism, behind the concept of emptiness - nothingness - is the idea that the world and all things in it, as they present themselves to our senses, are not real, but are images produced by our consciousness in the form we perceive.

*Like appearance are the beings (...), like a dream. For appearance and the beings are one, not two; dream and the beings are one, not two. All things are like appearance, like a dream. [1]*

In the exhibition space shrouded in fog stands a precisely crafted wooden boat. The sails are already set. To the right of it: three black pedestals with identical dimensions lined up next to each other. Enthroned on them - almost military-looking - are three black wind machines. In the second half of the room: nothing. This nothing, the empty space, accentuates the existing architecture - skylight roof, ornate ventilation shafts, clad steel girders, stone floor - of the "lower summer house" first mentioned in a document in 1564, which was adapted into an exhibition space in several steps at the beginning of the 20th century. A space in which not only architecture but also history is inscribed. Thus, nothingness is not nothing, but something - an unsolvable paradox - to which Barsuglia has dedicated himself in this

expansive work. For the artist, the preoccupation with nothingness represents a conceptual choice - to focus the gaze exclusively on the space, the boat and the attempt to steer it: a parable about life, a reflection on the whence, whither and why.



Barsuglia's staging of space involves an irritation of the gaze - an artistic strategy he also makes use of in his recent exhibition *Take on me* at Kunstforum Wien. He located a scene from the public space in the exhibition space. In an interview with the daily newspaper *Der Standard*, he says: I spent half a year walking through Vienna's streets, observing what all goes into facades in order to recreate it as faithfully

as possible to the original: Screws, dowels, scribbles ... You wouldn't believe how much is going on there!" [2]

The artist worked out the spatial installation in the Kunstpavillon with similar meticulousness: for example, he dealt with the statics of the space in order to get the boat, shrouded in fog, moving. The journey recalls daily political media reports about Greta Thunberg's journey in a sailboat to the climate summit in New York or images of people seeking protection at Europe's external borders. The full boat as a symbol of political power strategies. If we look a little further back, the metaphor of the ship has been used again and again in poetry and literature since antiquity. In Romanticism, sailing ships in painting were also a symbol of social and political upheaval. In mythology, the boat symbolizes life and death, the crossing into the realm of the dead. In order to be able to act as directly as possible, Barsuglia searches for strategies to involve the audience in his practice. Often the boundaries between artistic installation and social experiment are blurred, which also implies the intended possibility of failure. It is therefore not surprising that his works are often described as abandoned film sets in which the audience becomes the actor, the agent. In Innsbruck, he already drew attention to himself in this way with his temporary intervention *Hotel Publik* (2013) in public space. Everyone was invited to spend the night in this unusually small but fully functional house in front of the Landesmuseum and start the day in the morning traffic between pedestrians and motorists. Barsuglia's multifaceted and

cross-disciplinary works always oscillate between the sculptural and the ephemeral, the material and the immaterial - and are like a permeable landscape that allows new fields of dialogue to open up. In *Nichts*, this artistic approach is reflected in the form of the spatial installation described at the beginning and its performative display. On selected dates and after prior registration, individuals are invited for the duration of about 10 minutes into the exhibition space, which has been inhabited for this period by a child:

*It is  
as if  
we are  
just the two of us  
in a strangely familiar place,  
and by an unexpected coincidence  
we had run into each other,  
without knowing in each case  
how it would happen to us and what would await us, [3]*

the child receives the text written by Andreas Oberprantacher especially for the performance. This poetic-cryptic text module stands at the beginning of the performance and at the beginning of an emerging world that can possibly be located between appearance and dream?

*Instead of an oh so oceanic feeling,*

*that could supposedly redeem us  
or should lift us up,  
not least from the earthly lowlands  
of your and my gender  
we are again and again seized and plagued by thoughts,  
for example,  
that all events inevitably slip away from us,  
as soon as we think  
to have grasped it. [4]*

The space, like a vacuum, an in-between space that opens up, in which the two of you are in a familiar-unfamiliar situation, and in which very personal systems of reference, chains of association, narrative and visual worlds open up. The possibility of examining these is given. Barsuglia himself emphasizes that he rejects any reference in his artistic practice. Rather, he always observes his own system of reference, breaking it open to discover what spaces of possibility, imagination, and experimentation lie behind what has already been tried and tested. The possibility of failure is clearly inherent in this approach. The strategy, he also offers to the audience: Where does my, your, our understanding of this world and the society we live in actually come from? What happens when we examine and, if possible, break through entrenched viewing strategies,



behavioral and thought patterns? Nothing becomes a moment of in-between, a mythological crossing or an ephemeral temple in which the visitor is left with a boat (and a child) and is encouraged to critically examine ideas about the world, beings and things as they present themselves to our senses.

[1] Astasaharika Prahnparamita. Cited in: Schumann, H. W., Mahayana Buddhism, Munich, 1990, p. 48.

[2] Michael Wurmitzer in Der Standard: Otto Mauer Prize for Alfredo Barsuglia: the trickster with the dung bucket, December 4, 2019.

[3] Andreas Oberprantacher: Nothing, unpublished poem, 2020.

[4] Ibid.



## ZUM GOLDENEN AST, 2019

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Reininghausgründe Graz, permanent

The Graz-born artist Alfredo Barsuglia sets a sign in the largest ever newly developed district of Graz, the Reininghausgründe, on a roof terrace with raised beds, visible from afar: a golden branch, whose curved tip points self-reflectively to the place where it grew. Barsuglia is interested, not in imitating nature, but in creating new realities and communicative interfaces. If a resident passes his/her address on to someone else as “I live in the house *Zum goldenen Ast (To The Golden Branch)*,” an idea beyond anonymous numbering is created in communicative exchange, which can be communicated and found in real life. Interpreted differently depending on the distance – as a finger of E.T., lightning rod, feeler or branch – one can discuss it from afar or approach the sign, take a seat on its foundation and contemplate the connection between man, machine and nature. The title of this Art-in-Architecture project sounds like a genuine designation, in the form of “nose signs” that have been in use for centuries and that predominantly refer to upscale hospitality and gastronomy, thus creating an imaginary world whose denoting in the given context is initially irritating. The sign becomes the essential: the residential building refers to the branch, which creates possibilities of new social realities and narratives and thus initiates “history.”



## **DOUBLE-CHECK, 2019**

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Projektraum Viktor Bucher, Vienna, 10.09. – 20.11.2019

In the exhibition *Double-Check*, Alfredo Barsuglia presents a new series of works in which he combines painting and sculpture: Images turn into sculptures and sculptures into expansive paintings. *Double-Check* subtly explores the boundaries between sculpture and painting, readymade and sculpture craft, arbitrariness and meticulousness and questions 3-dimensionality in different variations.







## TAKE ON ME, 2019

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Kunstforum, Vienna, 7.11.2019 – 12.1.2020

(...) just as in the music video by the Norwegian popband a-ha, he creates an amalgamation between two worlds and narratives into which the audience can enter not only mentally but also physically. Upon entering the exhibition space visitors find themselves in a darkened, completely empty area in which the loud rumble of thunder and the sound of pattering rain pattering rain create their own spatial presence like architectural material. Turning to the right, the view opens a brightly lit, stage-set-like installation that is modeled in detail on a Viennese street scene: a dreary-looking scene where an advertising poster and graffiti adorn the run-down façade, electricity boxes and a garbage can are littered with stickers and an old bicycle is chained to a rusty stand. The whole scene has something eerie, but opens and closes, as if by magic every few minutes noisily a garage door and seems one behind dirty shop windows and the glass door to observe a couple in the cumbersome construction of a shelf. As if through the imaginary fourth wall in the naturalistic theater of the 19th century, the audience remains at first as fascinated voyeurs in the dark in front of this multimedia peep-box stage.

In accordance with Alfredo Barsuglia's holistic understanding of the dynamic of art and life, his artistic intervention does not end in the detailed imitation of street scene in the real physical exhibition space. Rather, he is interested in everyday rituals and social rules of behavior. He creates spaces for living and experiencing that develop transversely to visible reality. When the the imaginary boundary from the rain-soaked auditorium to the illuminated setting, they enter a coherent, but not necessarily plausible world of experience, which leaves them with a feeling of uncertainty. Boundaries between inside and outside, reality and fiction become blurred, as in the music video mentioned at the beginning.

In a subversive game of exaggeration, assertion, fiction and deception, Alfredo Barsuglia develops a multi-layered parcours of references in which he spins a dense web of associations. He skilfully marks and alters the exhibition space through the sophisticated use of sound, video, light and shadow, as well as extremely real-looking installation setting, he marks and changes the exhibition space. Alfredo Barsuglia makes it perceptible as a constantly changing space for action, which existing systems of reference and habitual patterns of perception, at the same time triggering new ways of seeing and taking the visitors on a fascinating journey into their own world of imagination and experience. Take on me: Get involved with me! *[Text: Fiona Liewehr for EIKON Magazin]*







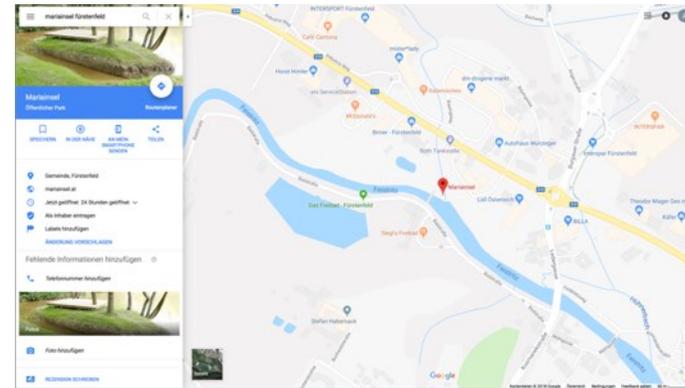
## MARIAINSEL, 2018

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Wasser Biennale and KöiR Art in public space Styria,  
Fürstenfeld, [www.mariainssel.at](http://www.mariainssel.at)

Maria is the most common first name in the district of Fürstenfeld, Franz the second most common. That is why the island I created in the Feistritz (the river that runs through the town of Fürstenfeld) is called Mariainssel and the channel between the island and the mainland is called Franzkanal. Fürstenfeld was and is a functioning city and did not need another place until 2018 when Mariainssel was created and manifested itself in the cityscape of Fürstenfeld. Mariainssel is a non-commercialized place, without zoning plan and clear destination, which was built in cooperation with the youth center and the young people of the local street worker team. Since March 2019, the Mariainssel has been designated as a new district of Fürstenfeld after a unanimous municipal council decision and is now a fixed part of the city system (see also Google maps). Today it is used by various social groups and communities, especially by young people, but also by adults seeking peace and quiet, fishermen, bathers or the fire department, which uses the island as a base for its fire department festival.

The island, which I understand as a sculpture in public space, was established through a three-month art and culture festival in the summer of 2018. The festival presented inter-national artists from a

variety of genres: art, performance and music, such as Barbara Kapusta (AT), Marina Sula (ALB/AT), Cesare Pietroiusti (IT), Andrea Maurer (AT) & Julius Deutschbauer (AT), Justin Lieberman (US/D) and Jasmine Pender (UK).







## **SOCIAL POOL, 2014**

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Mojave desert, in cooperation with the MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles, California

The so-called *Social Pool* was a small swimming pool in the middle of the Californian desert. The exact location was secret and, moreover, the pool was locked. The key to open the cover and the secret GPS coordinates were obtained at the MAK Center for Arts and Architecture in West Hollywood. Visitors were required to return the key within 24 hours. One key was handed out per day.

The art work was not only the pool, but especially the arduous journey (2 ½ hours by car followed by a 30-minute walk through the heat, past clap-snakes and scorpions) to the pool, where one had time to reflect on and discuss the values of our society: Water as a scarce commodity, especially in the desert where there was a drought in 2014, and swimming pools as a symbol of luxury and glamour. In a society where most people's daily needs (food, drink, housing, health) are met, luxury goods such as swimming pools are of crucial importance: they indicate the individual's place in the social hierarchy. Luxury goods are illusions created in the mind, not needs of the body. In order to possess them, one must earn money, work "hard," thereby boosting the economy and fully supporting the capitalist system.

Currently, the pool no longer exists in its original form. However, there are two Facebook groups with over 1,000 members whose goal is to restore *Social Pool*. *Social Pool* became a "Social Experiment."







## HOTEL PUBLIK, 2013

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Inner city of Innsbruck, 2013 – 2014

Sleeping is an intimate matter, which was brought into the public eye with the project *Hotel Publik*. The small house, which was located in the city center of Innsbruck, became during the winter months of 2013-14 a free sleeping place for people without accommodation, but also for those who simply wanted to experience how it feels to sleep in public. It was run like a hotel and cleaned daily by Emmaus Innsbruck, a non-profit organization of Caritas, for a fee, and the bed linen was freshly made.

One intention of the project was to draw attention to the problem of homelessness. On the other hand, it was about demonstrating how transparent people have become in general: through surveillance, but also by voluntarily turning their private lives inside out, as numerous docu-soaps on television or social media platforms confirm.

Check-in 12 p.m., check-out 10 a.m., key in the hotel.





**STERNENFELD, 2022**

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Schlossplatz, Eisenstadt, 2022 – 25

