

KUNSTPAVILLON

05.11.2021 – 15.01.2022

OPTIONS

RICCARDO GIACCONI



Ja!



TIROLER KÜNSTLER-INNENSCHAFT
TYROLEAN ARTISTS' ASSOCIATION

KUNSTPAVILLON

3	Dancing at the edge of the world
5	Visitors text
8	Room plan
9	List of works
10	Work descriptions
16	Blazon
24	Biography
25	Bibliography
26	Credits

DANCING AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

*My imagination makes me human and makes me a fool;
it gives me all the world and exiles me from it.* Ursula K. Le Guin 3

The program of Kunstpavillon and Neue Galerie Innsbruck 2021/22 is entitled **Dancing at the Edge of the World**, alluding to the eponymous essay collection by Ursula K. Le Guin. In this, the science-fiction author outlines alternative social and societal realms of possibility that are not anchored in a colonial, patriarchal, and xenophobic narrative structure.

In a present shaped by a pandemic, virulent socio-political issues and the big question of how we live together seem to have fallen by the wayside. The nation state assumes the role of a crisis manager, while visions of a backward-looking future solidify and historical amnesia sweeps across broad sections of society. But surely, isn't this very moment one with the inherent potential to accentuate speculative utopias and counter-narratives, to renegotiate ways of living together and empathy in a local and global context? And to look for ways to integrate diversity on our planet into everyday considerations? How can our relationship with the environment be shaped responsibly? What ways of living together have proved/or could prove to be beneficial? And how can a conscious approach towards the past and its vivid heritage succeed?

The beginning is marked by two exhibitions: **OPTIONS** (Riccardo Giacconi, Kunstpavillon) and **ARCHIVES OF RESISTANCE AND REPAIR** (Shiraz Bayjoo, Maeve Brennan & Onyeka Igwe, Neue Galerie Innsbruck). The artistic works in both exhibitions question prevalent knowledge regimes and recount stories that are hardly considered in the powerful canons of history-making: While Riccardo Giacconi develops references between the South Tyrolean resettlement implemented by Mussolini and Hitler and the current political climate in Europe; Shiraz Bayjoo, Maeve Brennan & Onyeka Igwe look for possible ways of re-evaluating historical materials from a decolonial, anti-imperialist perspective.

For 2022 a collaboration with Ursula Beiler, Enar de Dios Rodríguez, Hannelore Nenning, Elsa Salonen, Innsbruck International: Biennial of the Arts amongst others are in the making.

Dancing at the Edge of the World forms the first program cycle under the artistic direction of Petra Poelzl.

OPEN CALL JURY 2021/22 | 319 Applications

Margarethe Drexel (artist, Innsbruck/Los Angeles)

Luigi Fassi (artistic director, MAN Contemporary Art Museum/Italy)

Petra Poelzl (artistic & managing director Kunstpavillon & Neue Galerie Innsbruck)

OPTIONS

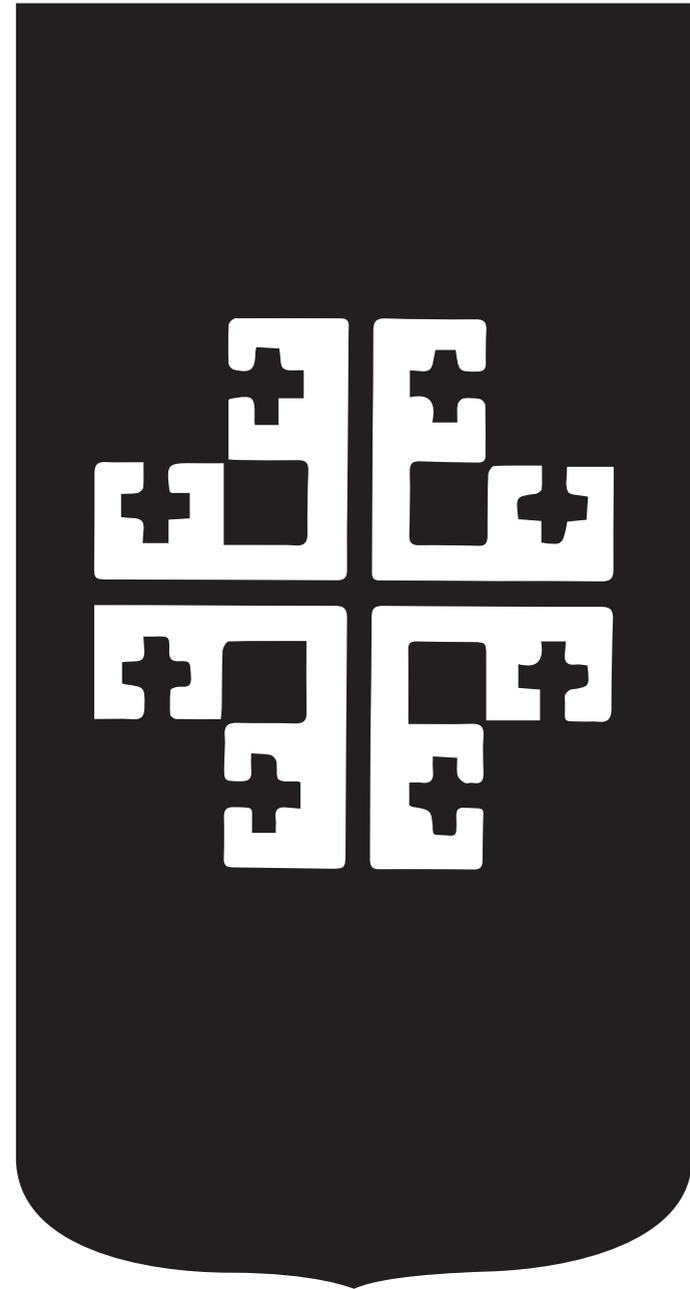
As a research-based body of work, **OPTIONS** takes its cues from the events between 1939 and 1943, when the native German-speaking people of South Tyrol were given the option of either emigrating to neighboring Nazi Austria (and other Third Reich territories) or remaining in Fascist Italy and being forcibly integrated into the mainstream Italian culture, thereby losing their language and cultural heritage. This system, enforced after an agreement between Mussolini and Hitler, was called the "Option Agreement" (*Option* or *Südtiroler Umsiedlung*).

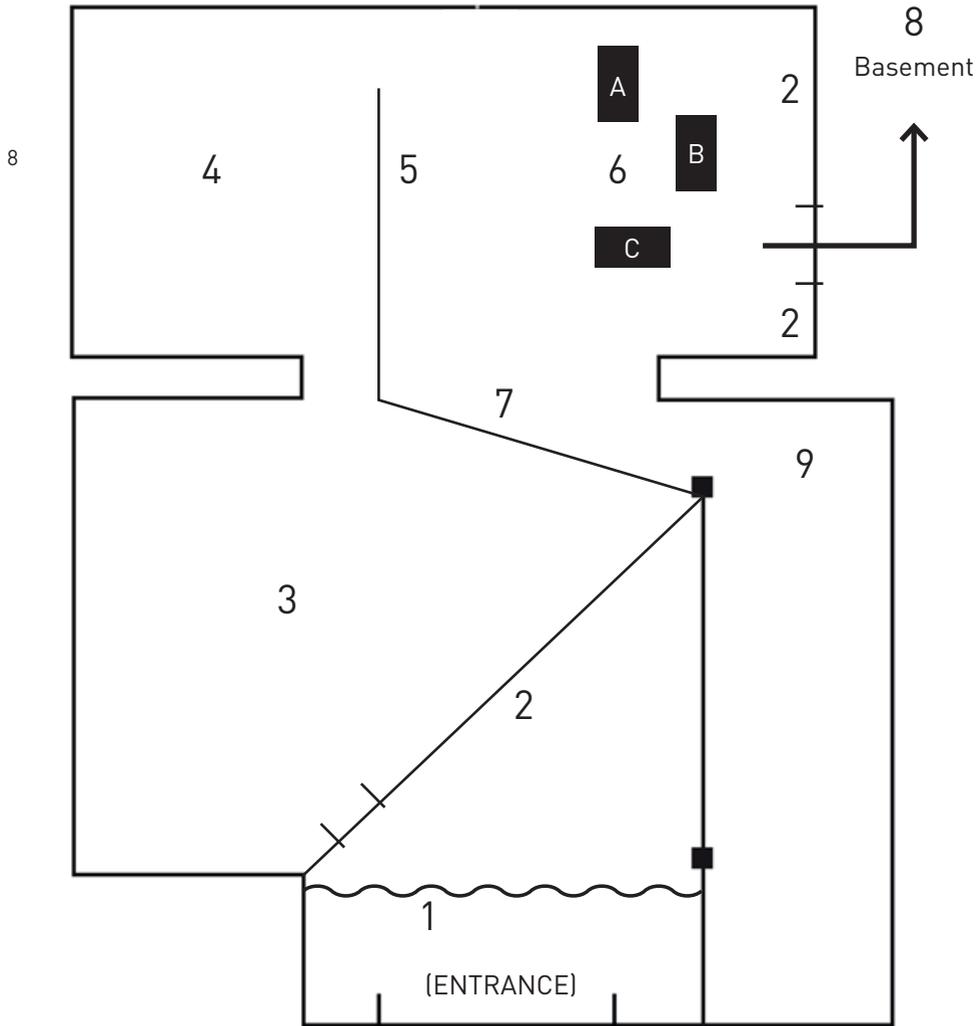
This project stems from research into archive and propaganda materials from the era. Riccardo Giacconi studied posters, leaflets, newspaper articles and political pamphlets from and about South Tyrol. "Options" also addresses the aftermath of the Option Agreement, including episodes of tension, conflict and terrorism between communities in South Tyrol, making use of archival materials and an extensive research *in situ*, including interviews with historians, activists, politicians, writers and various practitioners. Taking the South Tyrolean territory and the frontier between Italy and Austria as a case study, "Options" questions ideas of citizenship, borders, identity, language communities, *Heimat* (homeland), nativism, minority, and migration. The Option Agreement period and its aftermath may serve as a paradigm of

6 how such ideas are constructed, manipulated, instrumentalized, fictionalized and revoked following whims of institutions of power – and of how such ideas result in producing concrete, dramatic and indelible consequences on people.

The project establishes resonances between those ideas – and the way they were used in the linguistic and visual discourse of the Option Agreement period – and the use of the same ideas in contemporary political discourses in Europe. In this sense, “Options” is not configured as historical investigation, but as a constellation between two moments in time – as a commentary on today’s European political discourse through the lens of a past event.

The publication „Options“ (2020) was published by Rorhof, Bolzano.





- 1 **Blazon** (2019)
plastic curtain, 220cm x 500cm
- 2 **Tingierung** (2019)
series of posters, 100cm x 70cm
- 3 **Option** (2019)
audio installation, duration 40'00", looping
three wooden marionettes, variable dimensions
- 4 **Ekphrasis** (2019)
sound/light installation, duration 18'00", looping
- 5 **Gegenbild** (2019)
video projection, duration 18'00", looping
- 6 **Miscellanea**
A series of original documents, kindly on loan from the
Stadtarchiv/Stadtmuseum Innsbruck and
the Tiroler Landesmuseum, including:
A | 1940 propaganda xylography poster for Optanten
by South Tyrolean artist Heiner Gschwendt
B | *Was jeder Umsiedler wissen muss!* (Letterpress, 1940)
C | Mix of *Volkshilfswerk* cards from 1940/41 of the
(South Tyrolean) *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Optanten für
Deutschland* (7 items)
- 7 **Excerpts of the publication Options** (2020)
Design: Giulia Marzin, Edition 750, 14 x24 cm, Publisher:
Rorhof Bozen
- 8 **Merkblatt** (2019)
sound installation, duration 21', looping,
documentation of the performance in the course of steirischer
herbst '2019
- 9 **Reading Area**
Publications are listed in the Bibliography on page 25.

1 | **BLAZON** (2019)

This work is an introduction, a threshold, a backdrop, a roll of arms (Wappenrolle): an index of heraldic symbols collected and adapted by the artist to create a visual lexicon of fictional icons that take their meaning from graphic imagery and heraldic traditions. Composed of a series of plastic pixels or pieces, the curtain is a visual catalogue of 21 coats of arms, featuring shields of South Tyrolean towns and propaganda symbols from the Option events. The work is accompanied by a text at the back of this booklet: a “blazon”, which in heraldic terms indicates a description of a coat of arms from which the reader can reconstruct the appropriate image. In this case, the “blazon” functions as a fragmentary chronology of 21 South Tyrolean events.

2 | **TINGIERUNG** (2019)

This work is composed of a series of posters, printed by Litografia La Linterna in Cali, Colombia, using 19th Century letterpress machines. The posters display a series of fictional coats of arms: visual signifiers presented as elements of a potential heraldry based on the design of Fascist and Nazi propaganda materials related to the Option Agreement. Coats of arms and heraldry are visual constructions that have been used for centuries to represent an identity and a belonging to specific geographical, social, familiar, military or religious groups. In this series of posters, this coded language is used in order to question concepts such as identity, *Heimat* (homeland) and belonging, which were recurrent in the Option-related propaganda and that are recurring in today’s political discourse. Heraldry, as a symbolic

identitarian language, is intrinsically conflictive, relational, political. The posters also include extrapolations of texts from propaganda materials related to the Option Agreement. Through a fictional heraldic symbolism, mimicking the tone of calls to the local population but devoid of indications of a specific ideology, the posters spread clues of an unlocated political vibration. One of the posters includes parts of a poem by South Tyrolean poet Norbert C. Kaser (1947–1978). The title for this series of posters, Tingierung means ‘tincture’, referring to the limited palette of colours and patterns used in heraldry, wherein the colour orange was avoided, and considered a ‘stain’.

3 | **OPTION** (2019)

The audio track is composed of excerpts from letters written to and from South Tyrol in the years 1939 to 1943. Such letters, before being delivered, were opened and translated into Italian by the Fascist Minister of the Interior. Nowadays, such translations are collected in the Central Archives of the Italian State. Riccardo Giacconi has asked a series of South Tyrolean politicians, historians, writers and artists to re-translate such letters into their original language. As in a radio play, the different voices are arranged into a dramaturgy. The three puppets are specifically built by Colombian sculptor Herlyng Ferla and by the Carlo Colla & Figli Marionette Company, one of the most renowned puppetry companies in the world, with nearly three centuries of activity to their name. Their wooden forms, something between animal and anthropomorphic, refer both to the Tyrolean woodcarving tradition and to imaginary creatures haunting the legends of the region (Krampus, Peaschtl, Perchta, etc.)

4 | EKPHRASIS (2019)

12 Inside a dark room there is a beam of ever-changing light and an audio track. As in a session of hypnosis, a voice guides the visitors into a slideshow without images. It describes a series of situations via headphones; which listeners are invited to inhabit. Devoid of any references to date, names or locations, the voice describes a set of images connected to pivotal moments in the conflictual genealogy of the South Tyrolean territory.

5 | GEGENBILD (2019)

The mute film projected is the counter-image (*Gegenbild*), the complementary element to *Ekphrasis*. It is composed of a series of photographs from different archives, forming a visual study on the history and landscape of the North and South Tyrolean territory.

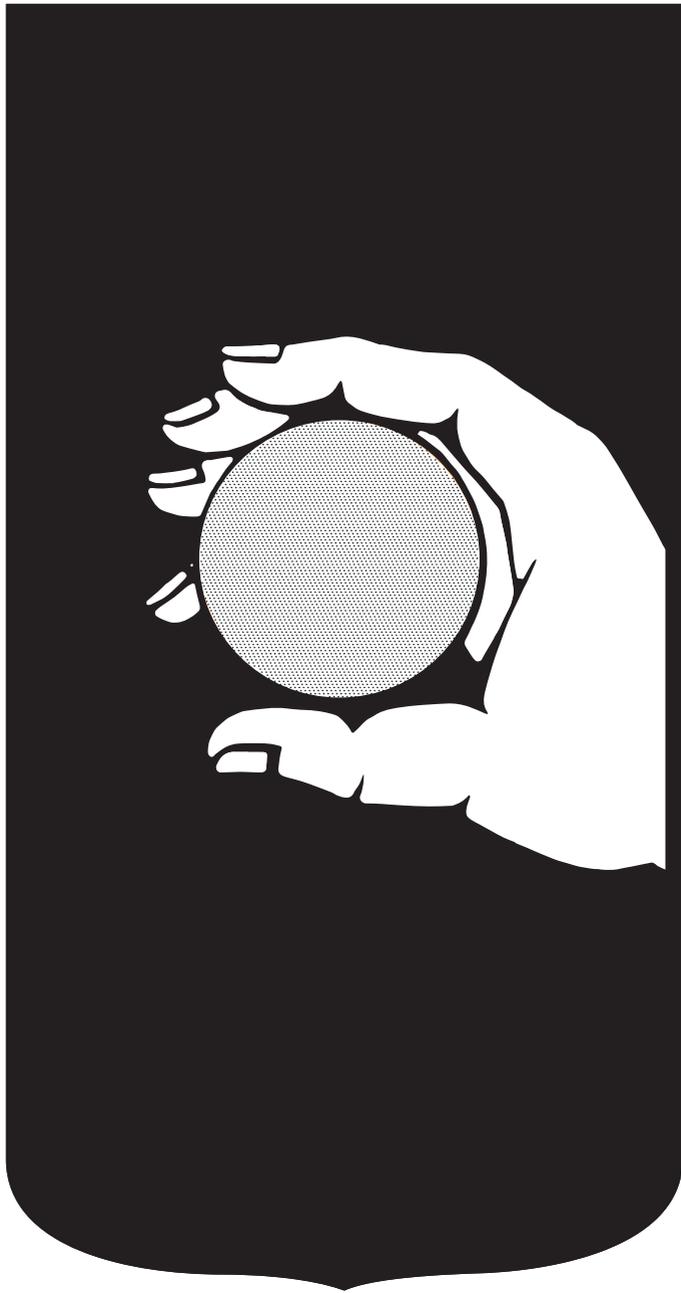
6 | MISCELLANEA

A series of original documents, kindly on loan from the Stadtarchiv/ Stadtmuseum Innsbruck and the Tiroler Landesmuseum, including:

- 1940 propaganda xylography poster for Optanten by South Tyrolean artist Heiner Gschwendt
- *Was jeder Umsiedler wissen muss!* (Letterpress, 1940)
- Mix of Volkshilfswerk cards from 1940/41 of the (South Tyrolean) Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Obtanten für Deutschland (7 items)

8 | MERKBLATT (2019)

The installation in the basement is the trace of a performance, which took place in a public square in Graz as part of the opening program of steirischer herbst '19. The performance, titled *Merkblatt* (meaning 'leaflet' in English), consisted of a 13 year-old girl shouting a series of sentences, a format reminiscent of "newsboys", young street newspapers vendors. The sentences are the textual deconstruction of a series of 10 "commandments" (*Gebote*) for "resettlers" (*Umsiedler*), originally published in a booklet distributed to South Tyrolean resettlers during the Option period. The original text has been de-constructed in collaboration with South Tyrolean poet Katja Renzler: sentences are progressively shuffled, words are altered, and the "commandments" reveal an increasingly ambiguous, absurd, violent character.



BLAZON

16

**1494 (or 1496)**

Albrecht Dürer, on his trip to Italy, visits Klausen and makes a sketch of the town, which he later uses for his copperplate engraving entitled Nemesis.

**1957**

A mass demonstration at Sigmundskron Castle, near Bozen-Bolzano. 35 000 South Tyrolean people attend the rally of Silvius Magnago, the new chairman of the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP), demanding separation from the Italian Trentino province.

**1921**

Around 400 Fascists from different Italian regions arrive at the Bozen-Bolzano Spring Fair where, during the costume parade, they attack participants and spectators with clubs, pistols and hand grenades. Around 50 South Tyrolean people are injured. The school teacher Franz Innerhofer is shot while trying to protect one of his pupils.

**1919**

During the Peace Conference in Paris following the end of WW1, the German-speaking territory of Tyrol is split in two. The section south of the Brenner Pass is ceded to Italy.

17

1922

Benito Mussolini takes over power in Italy and enforces measures of 'denationalization' of South Tyrol's German-speaking population, as well as mass settlement of ethnic Italians in the territory.

**1986**

Bomb attack at the Lana-Burgstall railway station claimed by the terrorist organization "Ein Tirol". A message spray-painted on the station walls reads, "Alexander Langer Sau Walsche": South Tyrolean intellectual Langer is called a sow and a Walsche (a derogatory South Tyrolean term to indicate Italians).

**1973**

Writer and poet Norbert Conrad Kaser spends his summer working at the highway toll gate in Sterzing, near the Austrian border. Primary school teacher, aspiring Capuchin friar, Italian Communist Party member and tireless traveller, Kaser is a fierce critic of Tyrolean conservatism. During a talk in Brixen, he calls the audience to "pluck the Tyrolean eagle like a chicken". In a poem written in Italian, la tua terra, he writes: "do you know that your land / can make you die" (sai che la tua terra / ti può far morire).





1959 and 1984

On the occasion of the 150th and the 175th anniversary of the Tyrolean war of liberation of 1809, a gigantic crown of thorns, symbolising the painful division of Tyrol, is carried by a group of Schützen in a parade in Innsbruck. Schützen (literally: shooters) was a militia formed in 1511 to protect the borders of Tyrol. Dissolved as a result of the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Schützen have survived as private folk associations in Austria and Italy until today.



1767

Andreas Hofer, Tyrolean folk hero and leader of the 1809 Tyrolean Rebellion against the Napoleonic invasion, is born in St. Leonhard in Passeier. The Andreas-Hofer-Bund, the only South Tyrolean anti-Nazi resistance organization, formed in 1939, will be named after him. Hans Egarter, Josef Mayr-Nusser, Friedl Volgger and Erich Amonn, its main leaders, mostly come from a Catholic background. Mayr-Nusser refuses to recite the Hitler oath after being drafted as a Nazi soldier, and is sentenced to death at the Dachau concentration camp. He dies en route to the camp in 1945.



1939

Hitler and Mussolini enforce the Option Agreement: German and Ladin-speaking South Tyrolean people are forced to choose between declaring themselves Italians

– therefore abandoning their language and traditions – or being relocated to Third Reich territories. 86% of the population opt for emigration; they are called Optanten. Those who choose to stay are called Dableiber. By 1943, only about 75 000 Optanten have emigrated, of whom 50 000 returned after the war.

1981

Ever resistant to imposed ethnic boundaries, Alexander Langer refuses to declare his linguistic group (German, Italian or Ladin) during the 1981 census in Bozen-Bolzano. This choice makes him ineligible to run for local elections. Langer had been active in the Italian radical leftist political organization Lotta Continua before joining the Green Party of South Tyrol, eventually becoming president of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament in 1989.



1961

On the night between 11 and 12 June, 37 electricity pylons are blown up in South Tyrol by the BAS (Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol, “South Tyrolean Liberation Committee”), to claim worldwide attention for the “South Tyrolean question”. The date is chosen as a reference to the local custom to light fires (Herz-Jesu-Feuer / “Sacred Heart Fires”) to commemorate the 1796 vow the Tyroleans made to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, asking protection for their land.



**1978**

Norbert Conrad Kaser dies in Bruneck from the consequences of his alcoholism. His funeral would be remembered as a rare moment of encounter for dissident and progressive South Tyrolean intellectuals. Alexander Langer would later write: "The destiny of Norbert C. Kaser is symbolic for many in South Tyrol. [...] It was at Norbert's funeral when I decided to return to South Tyrol, that we wanted no more dead, that something had to be done." Langer will later found the interethnic movement Neue Linke/Nuova Sinistra ("New Left").

**1961**

On the morning of 12 June, road maintenance worker Giovanni Postal dies in an attempt to remove a bomb placed on a tree by the BAS in Salorno, near the southern border of South Tyrol. He is the first victim of the Bombenjahre ("bomb years").

**1952**

Ettore Tolomei, Italian irredentist and former Fascist senator, is buried in the Montan cemetery. His tomb will be repeatedly damaged, as a sign of contempt. Tolomei had been the main designer of the Fascist policy for the Italianization of South Tyrol. He invented a detailed Italian toponymy to substitute German names, most notably

translating the German "Südtirol" with the Italian "Alto Adige". His program had included the prohibition of the term "Tirol" (and its variations), imposition of Italian as the only official language, closure of German-language schools, press and political parties.

1964

In a hay barn near Saltaus, BAS member Luis Amplatz is shot in his sleep by Christian Kerbler, probably an agent of the Italian intelligence agency. Fellow BAS member Georg Klotz is also injured with two shots, but manages to escape across the border to Austria. Kerbler is later sentenced in absentia by an Italian jury, but will never be caught.

**1943**

Italian ceasefire with the Allies. With the establishment of the Operationszone Alpenvorland ("Operational Zone of the Alpine Foothills"), South Tyrol is occupied by German Wehrmacht troops and becomes de facto part of the Nazi Reichsgau of Tyrol-Vorarlberg. Anton Spechtenhauser, mayor of Graun im Vinschgau, is arrested thanks to the active help of local Nazi officials. An unscrupulous businessman, collaborator of the Fascist regime, and opponent of the emigration to the Reich, he would die in the Majdanek extermination camp, near Lublin.



**1946**

Signing of the Paris Agreement by Italy's Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi and Austria's Foreign Minister Karl Gruber, as an integral part of the Peace Treaty between the Allies and Italy. The agreement envisages special measures to preserve the ethnic identity of the South Tyrolean People.

**1969**

Long negotiations between Italy and Austria result in the adoption of the so-called "Package" (Paket), a catalogue of measures for a new autonomy statute in South Tyrol, approved by the SVP (South Tyrolean People's Party), the Italian Parliament and the Austrian National Council. Its full implementation would be completed in 1992.

**1995**

Alexander Langer takes his own life near Florence, hanging himself from an apricot tree. Ten years before his suicide, he had written, "Where there is a latent multilingual vocation, it should be cultivated with care. It is a drive to relativize, to grasp differences, subtleties, nuances that do not suffer translation. All the more so in a Europe with more and more refugees, immigrants ..."

1981

South Tyrolean mountaineer Reinhold Messner, in a TV show, states that he is upset with the continuous abuse of the Heimat myth in South Tyrol, perpetrated "by a people who has betrayed their Heimat like no other, when in 1939, by an overwhelming majority, had opted for Germany, willing to leave their land". After the ensuing controversy, in 1989 Messner edits a book named *Die Option. 1939 stimmten 86% der Südtiroler für das Aufgeben ihrer Heimat. Warum?* ("The Option. In 1939, 86% of South Tyroleans voted to give up their homeland. Why?")



RICCARDO GIACCONI has studied fine arts at the IUAV University of Venezia. His work has been exhibited in various institutions, such as Grazer Kunstverein (Graz), ar/ge kunst (Bolzano), MAC (Belfast), WUK Kunsthalle Exnergasse (Vienna), FRAC Champagne-Ardenne (Reims), tranzitdisplay (Prague), Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo (Turin) and the 6. Moscow International Biennale for Young Art. He was artist-in-residence at the Centre international d'art et du paysage (Vassivière, France), lugar a dudas (Cali, Colombia), MACRO Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome, La Box (Bourges, France) and Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen (Innsbruck, Austria). He presented his films at several festivals, including the New York Film Festival, Venice International Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Visions du Réel and FID Marseille, where he won the Grand Prix of the International Competition in 2015. He co-founded the collective listening festival 'Helicotrema' and the audio storytelling studio 'Botafuego'.

Riccardo Giacconi: *Options*, Bolzano 2020.

Lucio Giudiceandrea und Aldo Mazza: *Das Handwerk des Zusammenlebens in Südtirol/Alto Adige*, Meran und Innsbruck 2019.

Alexander Langer: *Aufsätze zu Südtirol 1978-1995*, Meran 2005.

Stefan Lechner: *Die Absiedlung der Schwachen in das „Dritte Reich“. Alte, kranke, pflegebedürftige und behinderte Südtiroler 1939-1945*, Innsbruck 2016.

Felix Mitterer: *Verkaufte Heimat. Die Option. Eine Südtiroler Familiensaga 1938 bis 1945* (Drehbuch), Innsbruck und Wien 1989.

Günther Pallaver, Leopold Steurer und Martha Verdorfer: *Einmal Option und zurück. Die Folgen der Aus- und Rückwanderung für Südtirols Nachkriegsentwicklung*, Bozen 2019.

Hans Karl Peterlini: *Wir Kinder der Südtirol-Autonomie. Ein Land zwischen ethnischer Verwirrung und verordnetem Aufbruch*, Wien und Bozen 2003.

Eva Pfanzer: *Option und Gedächtnis. Erinnerungsorte der Südtiroler Umsiedlung 1939*, Bozen 2004.

Rolf Steininger: *Südtirol. Vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis zur Gegenwart*, Innsbruck und Wien 2012.

Artistic Director: Petra Poelzl

Production Manager: Cornelia Reinisch-Hofmann

Exhibition Architecture: Paul Irmann & Luis Navarro

Exhibition Booklet: Johanna Böhm

TEXTS

Introduction Dancing at the edge of the world: Petra Poelzl

Visitors text: Kate Strain

OPTIONS is an exhibition by Riccardo Giacconi originally conceived for steirischer herbst '19 — Grand Hotel Abyss and Grazer Kunstverein's Autumn Season.

Developed in collaboration with: Carteles La Linterna (Cali, Colombia), Franco Citterio (Compagnia Marionettistica Carlo Colla & Figli), Herlyng Ferla, Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen, Giulia Marzin, Katja Renzler, Ronja Mussbacher, Stadtarchiv/Stadtmuseum Innsbruck, Tiroler Landesmuseum, Carolina Valencia Caicedo.

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For Norbert C. Kaser's quote © Haymon Verlag, Innsbruck 1988.



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Kunstpavillon: Mittwoch – Freitag 12.00 – 18.00 & Samstag 11.00 – 15.00

Neue Galerie: Mittwoch – Freitag 12.00 – 17.00 & Samstag 11.00 – 15.00

Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen: Auf Anfrage

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