

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**7th ANNUAL FESTIVAL NEUE LITERATURE CONVENES FEB. 25-28 FOR "SERIOUSLY FUNNY" WEEKEND OF FREE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LITERARY EVENTS STARRING HIGH-PROFILE GERMAN-LANGUAGE AUTHORS AND THEIR AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS IN NEW YORK**



**James Hannaham, Jenny Offill, Siri Hustvedt, Ann Goldstein, Joshua Rothman, John Wray, and Natasha Wimmer Join Xaver Bayer, Sibylle Berg, Álvaro Enrigue, Iris Hanika, Veia Kaiser, Christopher Kloeble, Daniel Kehlmann, Pedro Lenz for Conversations on Books and Ideas Across the City**

New York, January 26, 2016 – [Festival Neue Literatur](#), the only U.S. festival to showcase fiction originally written in German, will take place from **February 25<sup>th</sup>- 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016**, at venues throughout New York City. This will be the seventh installment of Festival Neue Literatur, where New

York City once again hosts six of the most important emerging and established authors from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. These authors are important voices in the German-language literary world—but their work still remains to be discovered by many U.S. readers.

The 2016 Festival features the following authors: **Xaver Bayer** and **Veia Kaiser** (Austria); **Iris Hanika** and **Christopher Kloeble** (Germany); **Sibylle Berg** and **Pedro Lenz** (Switzerland); and **James Hannaham** and **Jenny Offill** (United States).

The theme of the 2016 festival, curated by acclaimed translator **Ross Benjamin**, is **Seriously Funny**. On the one hand, the focus on humor is meant as a counterpoint to a certain stereotype of German-language culture and literature as particularly humorless, grim, or heavy. On the other hand, the theme is intended to go further than that and explore the interdependence of humor and seriousness, how literary humor helps us navigate existential predicaments and even pain and trauma. In the works of all eight participating authors, humor is most often a response to something difficult – whether it's a story of a Swiss ex-con trying to find his place in the world, a satire of provincial life in an isolated village in the mountains of Austria, a formally experimental exploration into the breakdown of meaning in post-Wall Berlin, or a harrowing chronicle of drug addiction, racism and human trafficking. Rather than an escape from serious questions and profound themes, the humor of

the featured works is a way of grappling with such matters. It is to be found less in this or that funny line or moment and more in the authors' overall way of seeing and depicting the world.

Every winter, the festival pairs the six visiting authors with two U.S. authors, bringing diverse perspectives and sensibilities into an excitingly dynamic intercultural conversation. The 2016 festival will proudly feature two celebrated American novelists, **James Hannaham** and **Jenny Offill**. Former U.S. guests have included Adam Haslett, Tiphonie Yanique, Keith Gessen, and Francine Prose, among others. This year's moderators include award-winning novelists **Siri Hustvedt** and **John Wray**.

The festival's signature translation event "**There's Something About Translation**" will feature acclaimed authors **Daniel Kehlmann** and **Álvaro Enrigue**; celebrated translators **Ann Goldstein** and **Natasha Wimmer**; and Archive Editor at *The New Yorker* **Joshua Rothman**.

The **Friedrich Ulfers Prize**, awarded for the first time in 2013, will be presented at the festival's exclusive opening ceremony on February 25<sup>th</sup> to **Burton Pike**, translator and Professor Emeritus of Comparative Literature and German at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The prize is endowed with a \$5,000 grant and honors a publisher, writer, critic, translator, or scholar who has championed the advancement of German-language literature in the United States. Previous recipients of the Friedrich Ulfers Prize include **Robert Weil**, **Sara Bershtel**, and **Carol Brown Janeway**.

The celebrated and widely translated Vietnamese-American novelist **Monique Truong** will be the chair of Festival Neue Literatur 2016. "In his 1927 essay 'Humor,' Sigmund Freud explored the 'humorous attitude' and concluded that it bestowed a 'yield of pleasure' upon those who adopted it as well as those who served as onlookers. Freud was Seriously Funny. This year's FNL authors are too. Come for the Galgenhumor and stay for the Lustgewinn!" she states.

Each year, the festival also produces the **FNL Reader**, a booklet featuring book summaries and sample translations of the featured German-language works. The 2016 FNL Reader will be available for download in an electronic version on the festival website at [www.festivalneueliteratur.org](http://www.festivalneueliteratur.org).

Festival Neue Literatur extends an invitation to New York audiences to discover exciting voices from across Europe and the United States in readings and discussions in Manhattan and Brooklyn.

## FNL 2016 EVENTS LINE-UP

**All FNL events are free and in English. RSVPs are required due to limited seating:**

[rsvp@festivalneueliteratur.org](mailto:rsvp@festivalneueliteratur.org) | [bit.ly/FNLFacebookRSVP](http://bit.ly/FNLFacebookRSVP)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26<sup>th</sup>, 6PM

### **Words with Writers**

New York's brightest students take on FNL authors in a lightning round of literary speed-dating.

**Featuring all six German-language authors and moderated by festival curator Ross Benjamin.**

VENUE: Austrian Cultural Forum New York (11 East 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, Manhattan)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27<sup>th</sup>, 12:30PM (doors open at noon)

### **There's Something About Translation...**

Join Festival Neue Literatur for an intimate conversation about literature in translation with NYC's celebrated literary editors, translators, and writers. If you've ever wondered how your favorite book

from abroad arrived at your local bookstore and in our cultural consciousness, join us for a snapshot into this fascinating journey narrated by the people who have made it happen. Featured works include: Elena Ferrante's *Days of Abandonment*; Álvaro Enrigue's *Sudden Death: A Novel*; and Daniel Kehlmann's *Fame*.

**Featuring Daniel Kehlmann, Natasha Wimmer, Álvaro Enrigue, Laura Perciasepe, Ann Goldstein, Joshua Rothman, and moderated by Sal Robinson.**

VENUE: Bowery Poetry Club (308 Bowery, Manhattan)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27<sup>th</sup>, 6PM

### **No Joke**

Nietzsche says that humans alone laugh because we alone suffer so deeply that we had to invent laughter. How do writers use humor in their work to confront, navigate and come to terms with pain, trauma and crisis? What roles can literary humor play in response to distressing, harrowing or nightmarish experiences?

**Featuring authors Xaver Bayer, Sibylle Berg, Iris Hanika, James Hannaham, and moderated by Siri Hustvedt.**

VENUE: Book Court (163 Court Street, Brooklyn)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28<sup>th</sup>, 12PM

### **A Literary Brunch**

The six German-language authors of Festival Neue Literatur pair up with NYC actors to give a sampling from their work, providing a taste of new writing from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. Light German fare will be served.

**Featuring all six German-language authors, performances by New York City actors, and moderated by festival curator Ross Benjamin.**

VENUE: Deutsches Haus at NYU (42 Washington Mews, Manhattan)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28<sup>th</sup>, 6PM

### **Laughing Matters**

Wry, mordant, acerbic, irreverent, witty, devastating, redemptive: There are so many adjectives to describe different sorts of humor in literature. And in conveying funny or absurd aspects of human predicaments and relationships, writers can also illuminate profound truths. What does it mean to reveal us to ourselves in ways that also make us laugh at ourselves?

**Featuring authors Veve Hesse, Christopher Kloeble, Pedro Lenz, Jenny Offill, and moderated by John Wray.**

VENUE: McNally Jackson Books (52 Prince Street, Manhattan)

## **ABOUT FESTIVAL NEUE LITERATUR:**

Festival Neue Literatur (FNL) was established as a collaborative project of New York's leading German-language cultural institutions: the Austrian Cultural Forum, the Consulate General of Germany, the Consulate General of Switzerland, Deutsches Haus at Columbia University, Deutsches Haus at NYU, the German Book Office New York, the Goethe-Institut New York, and Pro Helvetia.

All FNL events are free of charge, though RSVPs are required. The 2016 Festival will take place from February 25 to 28, 2016.

Festival Neue Literatur 2016 is made possible through generous support from BMW of North America and Radeberger Pilsner.