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release

Press

**The theme of the 23rd Festival Art Stays in Ptuj, which runs from 10 July to 14 September 2025, is 'DUST: For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return'.** This is the continuation of a multi-year programme in which directors **Jernej Forbici** and **Marika Vicari** have conducted an articulate reflection on the relationship between humans and the environment, considering both its potential and its vulnerabilities.

The uncertain and often **fragile nature** of the **future** is seen as dependent on our ability to carefully manage **natural resources** and **post-production**, reflecting our constant desire to change and reshape the world. The need to approach this with awareness and to find **space** — understood as both the physical environment and conceptual space — is an extension of our influence and responsibility. These are just some of the elements of this new journey to which the festival invites us.

**DUST** is a point of departure and arrival; a territory of belonging and return; a complex aesthetic experience with tensions and limits. The theme and material may appear simple, but every artistic investigation reveals different implications, whether social, historical, geographical or physical.

Among the most eagerly awaited protagonists at the festival are the photographer **Vincenzo Castella**, who will present *Aiming the Dust*, an interesting and in-depth study of the Sacred Renaissance in collaboration with **Studio la Città** at the **Luna Gallery**, and the Swiss artist **Claudia Kübler**, who will present her *Best Case, Worst Case, Average Case* installation, showing traces of hundreds of years in rock and earth layers, at the **Ptuj City Gallery** instead. Also exhibiting are the Italians **Filippo Berta** with *Like the Dust in the Wind*, a symbolic and conceptual video project investigating the fragility and power of human identity, presented in collaboration with **Prometeo Gallery by Ida Pisani**, and **Maria Elisabetta Novello** with *11687 GRAMMI CIRCA* and *Archivio Polvere*, two installations exhibited in collaboration with **Galleria Fumagalli** and **Studio Faganel**, which present contemporary finds alongside urban remains. Next is the work of the Polish artist **Wojtek Radtke**, which lies somewhere between art and science, reflecting on the indelible trace of memory that remains in the DNA of a living being even after its disappearance. Argentinian multidisciplinary artist **Juan Sorrentino** presents the transformation of matter and nature into the ash that composes his sound works. While the German **Wolfgang Stiller** looks at the transformation and metamorphosis of human beings in *Burnt Heads*, the young Slovenian sculptor **Jera Dacar** speaks of today's society producing its own poison through its estrangement from nature. Completing the exhibition is *The Time Zero*, a monumental work by **Metod Frlic**, whose shape resembles a broken hourglass, a metaphor for the inevitability of time passing that cannot be stopped.

Beauty is hidden in the dust and there is an indescribable power in decay and transience, where moments of eternity are born that art elevates for us to appreciate. **Ptuj Castle** is hosting two solo exhibitions: one by the English sculptor **Paul Hazelton**, who presents three-dimensional structures made of dust and hair; and the other, *Marble Dust*, by the South

African artist **Talya Lubinsky**, who creates new traces of decaying pages. These exhibitions offer an important reflection on belonging, memory, loss, return, presence and absence.

**'DUST thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return'** is a fitting beginning and end since the origin of humankind. In this film, art, material and skin become repositories of time, memory, potential and human action. Created, interpreted, read, used and manipulated in different ways by many international artists, it is presented in a variety of forms, selected precisely for their uniqueness or mutual correspondence. Among them at **Mihelič Gallery** are: **Claudia Kübler** presenting her *Regolith* installation, which reflects a geomorphic process in fast and requires active participation from the viewer; **Gabriele Picco**, an Italian artist and writer who empties bags of memories and stories trapped in the void to create paintings from that dust; and **Tomáš Koudela**, a Czech artist whose conceptual message is encapsulated in the words *'Nowhere to go, still I walk'* and *'Everything is in motion'*. Italian artist **Serena Vestrucci** paints canvases with cosmetics, offering an ambivalent reading: they are created with cosmetics, and they give us the impression of seeing a space that is not actually there. **Liza Libenko** from the Czech Republic depicts melancholy and decadence as the fine line between life and death. In contrast, **Paolo San Martín** from Chile uses a provocative pop language that makes us smile. **Marek Schovanek**, a Czech-Canadian artist, evokes human existence through the creation of a contemporary mosaic of the Anthropocene era.

**DUST's** research and dialogue between form and fragment reveal the lights and shadows of our times, interpreted by: **Boštjan Kavčič**, who will present a performance on the **pedestrian bridge** (in collaboration with ZDSLU) and a series of sculptures in the **Dominican Monastery** and at **Ptuj Castle**. These sculptures take us back to where we have been and where we should return, helping us to play a more conscious role in our existence; At the **Narrow Gallery Art Stays**, **Bojan Golčar** investigates the history of his city, written in dust, through a series of photographic shots entitled *Sediments and Traces*. In the exhibition space of the **Ptuj Library**, **Giuseppe Ripa** presents *Drift & Shift*, curated by **Gianluca Marziani** and **Italo Bergantini**, inviting us to explore the temporal dimension and the disconnection between historical and individual time through his photos.

Also participating in the **23rd edition of the festival** will be: French choreographer and dancer **Julien Klopfenstein**, who will open the festival with *From the Dust of the Earth* at the **stage of the Dominican Monastery**, exploring themes of nature, impermanence, and the connection between the human body and the earth; **Marko Batista**, who will perform on an **Art Stays Stage** in Ptuj with a live media set on the history of volcanic ash. This is a metaphorical journey into the future of time, where ash flies as the mystery-bearer of change and the echo of lost worlds.

Finally, the **ART STAYS Festival 2025** presents three Slovenian collaborations and external projects. The first of these is *The Embodiment of Transience*, an all-female exhibition presented at the **Creative Centre Breg** in Majšperk and curated by **Doroteja Kotnik**. This exhibition showcases works by **Ana Janež**, **Ajda Kadunc**, **Blažka Križan**, **Alja Košar**, **Anastazija Pirnat** and **Katarina Marov**. It reflects on moments when we immerse ourselves in silent dialogues between form and fragment, light and shadow. It shows that transience is not only a reminder of the end, but also a beginning. The second project, *From the Dust*, curated by **Dušan Fišer** and presented at the **Magistrat Gallery**, features works by students from the Ptuj High School of Art.

**GEA Dance Community's** third multidisciplinary project, *Prahajanja (Dust Transitions)*, will be presented at **Borl Castle**. Dancing bodies will fragment and merge into rhizomatic constellations that erase familiar patterns and simultaneously sketch out new ones. Each formation pulses with tension before dispersing back into space, leaving behind a residue of the past: an echo of disintegration; the possibility of metamorphosis; and the promise of what is yet to come.

Inside the **Borl Castle**, the exhibition will feature **Cristina Treppo's** *Restitution* installation, which recreates the sensation of the work being absorbed by surfaces. This installation recalls unconscious mechanisms of removal and processes of stratification. Outside, there will be **Lynn Book's** *Conductor* sound installation. Borl Castle will also host a performance by **OoopopoiooO (Valeria Sturba and Vincenzo Vasi)**, which lies somewhere between surrealism and Dadaism and features the theremin, junk and electroacoustic voices.

The rich programme of the ART STAYS Festival in Ptuj is completed by talks with artists, a **Drama Queen** rock concert, lectures, dedicated workshops for children and adults, and an **Academy room** where, among others, two unique experiences with **DUST** will be presented. The first is a *SCRAPING RUSKIN* reading by **Jorge Otero Pailos**. In this piece, the artist questions our ethical responsibilities in preserving the environment. In doing so, he challenges the disciplines of architecture and art. The second intervention is the intriguing documentary *DUST TO DUST* about the Japanese designer **Yuima Nakazato**, which explores the collaborative efforts to create a more sustainable future in fashion by examining the scale of waste and the urgent need for social change.

The opening weekend of the 23rd ART STAYS Festival, ***DUST: For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return***, takes place from 10 to 13 July 2025 in Ptuj and is supported by Ptuj City Municipality and the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia.

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### ***DUST: For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return***

#### **23. Festival sodobne umetnosti ART STAYS, Ptuj**

Opening weekend: **10 – 13 July 2025**

Exhibitions: **until 14 September 2025**

Artists: **Marko Batista, Filippo Berta, Lynn Book, Vincenzo Castella, Jera Dacar, Metod Frlic, GEA dance community, Bojan Golčar, Paul Hazelton, Ana Janež, Ajda Kadunc, Bostjan Kavčič, Julien Klopfenstein, Alja Košar, Tomáš Koudela, Blažka Križan, Claudia Kübler, Liza Libenko, Talya Lubinsky, Katarina Marov, Maria Elisabetta Novello, Gabriele Picco, Anastazija Pirnat, Wojtek Radtke, Marek Schovanek, Juan Sorrentino, Cristina Treppo, Wolfgang Stiller, Serena Vestrucci, OoopopoiooO (Valeria Sturba and Vincenzo Vasi), Giuseppe Ripa, Paolo San Martin.**

Partners: **Regional Museum Ptuj-Ormož, Ptuj City Gallery, Ptuj City Theatre, Dominican Monastery, Javne službe Ptuj, Public Institute Belana, Studio La città (IT), Gallery Luna, Prometeo Gallery di Ida Pisani (IT), Gallery Fumagalli (IT), Studio Faganel (IT), University in Ostrava (CZ), ZDSLU, Creative Centre Breg – Majšperk, Gallery FO.VI, Espoarte, Mladina, Ptujška klet, Hotel Mitra, TAM-TAM.**