

PRESS RELEASE

## **IN THE NIGHT FROM HOLY SATURDAY TO EASTER SUNDAY, BILLI THANNER'S *HIMMELSLEITER* WILL SHINE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN NEON GOLD ON THE SOUTH TOWER OF ST. STEPHAN'S CATHEDRAL AS A SYMBOL OF HOPE.**

**PRESS PREVIEW** Wednesday, March 31, 2021, 8 p.m.

**LOCATION** St. Stephen's Cathedral, Stephansplatz 1, 1010 Vienna

**PERFORMANCE** *The 33 Virtues* by Billi Thanner

**SPEAKERS ARE** Toni Faber, Parish Priest of the St. Stephan's Cathedral, Vienna, Ursula Simacek, CEO SIMACEK Facility Management Group, Vienna and Billi Thanner, Artist, Vienna

**Covid 19:** Mask mandate, social distancing and possibility to get a rapid test

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**PRESS CHRISTINA WERNER PR** Interviews, press release, information on Billi Thanner's artistic work and photo material on request at T + 43 1 524 96 46 – 22, M +43 699 10 48 70 72, [werner@kunstpresse.at](mailto:werner@kunstpresse.at)

March 17, 2021, Vienna From Easter Sunday, April 04, 2021 Billi Thanner's *Himmelsleiter* will rise into the Viennese sky for the first time, illuminated in neon gold on the south tower of St. Stephan's Cathedral. The *Himmelsleiter* is the most recent work of the Viennese artist. The art installation, which was conceived at the invitation of Cathedral Parish Priest Toni Faber for the upcoming Easter celebration, consists of a neon ladder starting inside St. Stephan's Cathedral, at the baptistery, piercing the vault and then leading up to the top of the south tower. In the night from Holy Saturday to Easter Sunday, before the beginning of the Easter Vigil in St. Stephan's Cathedral (9 p.m.), the *Himmelsleiter* will be ceremoniously illuminated for the first time. It will then shine in the Viennese nights until May 31, 2021.

*„The view from the bottom up, is the first rung, itself only preparation for the preparation, and if you look more closely, it actually begins with the last rung. Humans often go beyond themselves in many ways, and each time they do so, they fill their very lives with meaning. The Jacob's ladder as a ladder of meaning, as many times as it takes for us to realize that the lowest rung is the same as the highest. To me, it means that we live life on different levels and ranks. But the Jacob's ladder teaches us also that it doesn't matter which life we live, but on which level. No one needs to worry, but that may only become clear to us when we are standing on the upper rungs of the Jacob's ladder“,* explains Billi Thanner the meaning the Jacob's ladder has for her.

Looking up also means to give free rein to one's longings, desires and hopes, to grant oneself courage, strength and perseverance, to recharge one's batteries and confidence, to long for the best for oneself and for all, regardless of gender, age, religion and culture.

### **ABOUT THE SYMBOL OF THE JACOB'S LADDER**

The Jacob's ladder (or celestial ladder) symbolizes the ascent and descent between heaven and earth. This symbol goes back to a biblical story from the Old Testament. During his flight from his twin brother Esau from Be'er Sheva to Harran, Jacob, son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham, sees the Jacob's ladder in a dream vision. On it the dreamer sees the angels of God ascending and descending. In the Gospel of John in the New Testament, the image of the Jacob's ladder is typologically transferred to Jesus Christ, who in the Christian religion died for mankind as the Son of God, rose again and ascended into heaven.

### **THE VIRTUES – SYNONYMOUS WITH HEART QUALITY**

The German word for virtue "Tugend", in Middle High German "tugent", is derived from "taugen" and means to have strength, power, good qualities and skills. In its original basic meaning as also applied in the context of the patriarchal moral code, the word virtue refers to a person's fitness, prowess, and excellence. Generally, virtue is understood to mean an outstanding quality or exemplary attitude. In the broadest sense, any capacity for action that is considered valuable can be called virtue.

*„The rungs of the ladder represent the virtues. Based on this Jacob's ladder from the Old Testament, Christian spirituality often compares a person's personal path to God with a ladder or staircase to paradise. This path to heaven leads up the steps of the virtues. With each successive rung, selfish needs of this world are left behind in order to experience more and more the presence of God. In these challenging times, the illumination stands for the three divine virtues of hope, faith and love – representative of the great number of virtues in the spiritual tradition of the Church Fathers, especially the Desert Fathers. One of them, John Climacus (+ around 649), lived as a monk on the Sinai Peninsula at the age of 16; there he was a hermit for 40 years, including several years as abbot of a monastery. He wrote a work of Christian asceticism, which is one of the most important writings in the monastic tradition: "The Ladder to Paradise". In it, he describes the spiritual ascent of the monk in 30 steps: from breaking with the world, through the basic virtues, the purification of the seeker of God, the culmination of the path of practice, to union with God, lead these steps of spiritual growth, they end in agape, resting in God through faith, hope and love.“* Toni Faber, Parish Priest of the St. Stephan Cathedral, Vienna

### **33 VIRTUES**

Bravery +++ Compassion +++ Consideration +++ Consistency +++ Courage +++ Decency +++ Determination +++ Devotion +++ Diligence +++ Discipline +++ Discretion +++ Forgiveness +++ Frankness +++ Friendliness +++

Generosity +++ Gratitude +++ Honesty +++ Impartiality +++ Justice +++ Kindness +++ Loyalty +++ Mindfulness +++  
Modesty +++ Open-mindedness +++ Patience +++ Perseverance +++ Politeness +++ Prudence +++ Respect +++  
Selflessness +++ Spirit of liberty +++ Steadfastness +++ Wisdom +++

### **MAKING VISIONS COME TRUE**

*"Our goal is to put visionary projects in the public spotlight and to promote them. The focus of SIMACEK's long-term 'Visionary Projects' program is on projects in the fields of art and culture, but also architecture and healthcare. The art installation 'Himmelsleiter' by Billi Thanner is a project dear to my heart and realizes exactly those visions that we want to promote with our 'Visionary Projects' program,"* says Ursula Simacek, CEO SIMACEK Facility Management Group, about her dedication to "Visionary Projects" and thanks to whose support Billi Thanner's *Himmelsleiter* and the performance *The 33 Virtues* could be realized.

### **BILLI THANNER**

Billi Thanner's artistic works are dedicated to beauty. Since the early 1990s she has been working as a visual artist. Her work spans a range of genres like painting, sculpture, sculptural intervention, spatial installation, action and performance, and is dedicated to the relationship between humans, nature, art and society. For her actions and performances, which are designed in an interdisciplinary way, the artist regularly invites creative artists from various disciplines – theater, music, dance, fashion and design – as well as friends to participate. With a self-confident, powerful and impulsive visual language Billi Thanner addresses the imbalance between social, economic and ecological actions: shallowness, excessive consumption and throwaway mentality, exploitation of human labor and nature, environmental pollution and waste of resources. But always at the center is the human being.

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### **INFORMATION**

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