

## **LET SCHEPENESSE RETURN HOME!**

Milo Rau, renowned Swiss theatre director and author, is donating his Grand St.Gallen Culture Prize to Schepenesse: The famous mummy in the Abbey Library should return to Egypt and be kept in dignity in the meantime. This demand is launched on the 17th of November with the "St.Gallen Declaration for Schepenesse". The committee cooperates with the «College of Archaeology of Cultural Heritage» from the Arab Academy of Science, Technology and Maritime Transport in Aswan. Milo Rau receives support from prominent figures from science, culture and politics such as Adolf Muschg, Sibylle Berg, Bénédicte Savoy, Mattea Meyer, Peter Stamm, Heba Abd el Gawad, Jean Ziegler, Gesine Krüger, Paul Rechsteiner und Kim de l'Horizon.

She is famous across the land – Schepenesse, the Ancient Egyptian mummy in possession of the St. Gallen Abbey Library. Displayed, unwrapped to the chest in a glass case, alongside her two sarcophagi in the baroque hall of books, she is for many the main attraction of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, which draws some 150,000 visitors a year.

But the story of Schepenesse is not one of which St.Gallen and Switzerland can be proud of: Schepenesse - daughter of a priest and member of the spiritual elite lived between 700 und 650 BC - was snatched from her tomb by grave robbers. They sold the mummy to a French businessman, who in turn donated it to the then mayor of St.Gallen. Now Schepenesse lies unwrapped in the Abbey Library - although unwrapping and displaying a naked corpse contradicts ancient Egyptian beliefs - and is presented to the gaze of tourists.

**«We cannot change history, but we can correct the mistakes of the past.»**  
(Prof. Monica Hanna, Egyptologist)

For Milo Rau it is clear: "This questionable display is unworthy of a cultural metropolis like St Gallen!". Therefore, he is investing the prize money from the Grand St. Gallen Culture Prize (30,000 SFR) to make a repatriation possible. "Let Schepenesse return home!" Even if the provenance of the mummy has been clarified as best as possible through the efforts of the Abbey Library, and the purchase by St. Gallen was formally legal, the grave robbery remains at the beginning of the chain, which forms an ethical and legal deeply questionable attraction for the exhibiting institution.

In the "St. Gallen Declaration" published today, Milo Rau, together with a commission of experts around the Egyptian filmmaker Rabelle Erian, the St. Gallen theologian Rolf Bossart and the well-known Egyptian professor Monica Hanna (professor and founding dean of the "College of Archaeology of Cultural Heritage" in Aswan), makes the following demands:

- **A PLACE FOR THE DEAD!** Together with all the parties concerned – the Abbey Library, the Catholic Administration, the city and canton of St.Gallen, UNESCO, our associates and advisers in the fields of cultural history and religious studies, and cooperating Egyptian organizations, individuals, authorities and scholars – we will set up a work group to devise plans for returning Schepenesse to

her spiritual homeland by the end of 2023 and present them to the responsible authorities for approval, and bring the relevant issues into the public arena.

- **LET SHEPENESE REST IN PEACE!** In the meantime, as a temporary, minimum solution, we call for the dignified handling of her body. The mummy should only be exhibited in her (closed) sarcophagus. Alternatively, a photo documentation could be shown while Schepenese herself and her sarcophagi are kept in an appropriate place, such as the crypt of the monastery, alongside the remains of the St. Gallen monastery's founders.
- **EXCHANGE RATHER THAN APPROPRIATION!** By taking the mummy, St. Gallen has stolen, albeit unintentionally, a key spiritual artefact from another high culture. Why don't we provide compensation? By lending or even donating a famous St. Gallen manuscript, such as the Abrogans, to an Egyptian museum? St. Gallen should take the lead and send St. Gallen spirituality abroad – to stop stealing and start exchanging globally! Respectfully, generously, and transparently! Let's take this chance to start the cultural exchange now!
- **A FRANC FOR DIGNITY!** The costs for working out the temporary solution for Schepenese can be covered by the prize money from the Great St. Gallen Culture Prize 2022, a total of 30,000 francs. The additional costs can be covered by the city and canton of St. Gallen: by donating one Franc for Dignity from each entrance ticket of the Abbey Library – 5 percent of the entrance fee – to the Schepenese fund for cultural exchange and debate!
- **AN EXAMPLE FOR THE WORLD!** The Abbey Library along with Schepenese and her sarcophagi is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Back in 1978, UNESCO adopted a Charter for the restitution of looted cultural property. Schepenese clearly falls under the regulations of this charter. We call on all UNESCO member states to support the "St. Gallen Declaration for Schepenese". The cooperation of the Abbey Library will show the world an innovative example of fair and respectful interaction between cultures.

The committee stands in contact with the «College of Archaeology of Cultural Heritage» from the Arab Academy of Science, Technology and Maritime Transport in Aswan». The appeal was first signed by about 100 personalities - among them Sibylle Berg, Adolf Muschg, Roger de Weck, Bénédicte Savoy, Gesine Krüger, Peter Stamm, Jakob Tanner, Christina Lötscher, Mattea Meyer, Peter Schneider, Kim de l'Horizon, Paul Rechsteiner and many more. Schepenese will also be the prominent guest in Milo Rau's exhibition at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, which begins today. Schepenese is to become an example of fair, respectful and innovative interaction between cultures: «Let's turn a burden into dignity! Let us make St. Gallen once again a visionary place of a new global culture.»

For the dignity of Schepenese. For the dignity of St. Gallen. To right an old wrong. Out of respect for the dead: Let Schepenese return home!

You can find the declaration here:

[https://www.augustinpr.de/tl\\_files/AugustinPR\\_Theme/Dokumete/St-Galler\\_Erklaerung-final\\_engl.pdf](https://www.augustinpr.de/tl_files/AugustinPR_Theme/Dokumete/St-Galler_Erklaerung-final_engl.pdf)  
Homepage: <https://www.return-shepenesis.com/>

#### ANNOTATION:

November 17th marks the 25th anniversary of the Luxor attack, which shook the world on November 17th, 1997 and claimed the lives of 62 people. Among the dead were also 36 Swiss. The assassination took place in the temple of Hatshepsut, where, according to current state of research, the looted tomb of Schepenese is located. Our thoughts are with all the victims of this attack and the bereaved families.

**THE ST.GALLEN DECLARATION FOR SCHEPENESE  
WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON NOVEMBER THE 17TH.  
THERE WILL BE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:**

**3:30 PM: Ritual in honour of Schepeneze at Gallusplatz in St. Gallen.**

**4:30 PM: Press conference in regards to the happening – after a march from Gallusplatz - in the Lokremise (Grünbergstrasse 7, 9000 St.Gallen) and followed by a discussion with experts until 6pm.**

**AT 7:00 PM the actual award ceremony will take place to hand over the Cultural Foundation's Great Prize of St. Gallen to Milo Rau.**

**AT 10:00 PM the exhibition "Why Art?" will open in the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen (Davidstrasse 40, 9000 St.Gallen).**

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# «ST. GALLER DECLARATION FOR SCHEPENESE»

## COMMITTEE «ST.GALLER DECLARATION FOR SCHEPENESE»

**Milo Rau**, author and director, St.Gallen/Gent; **Monica Hanna**, professor of Egyptology, Cairo; **Rabelle Erian**, filmmaker, Cairo/München; **Rolf Bossart**, theologian, St.Gallen

## ACCOMPANYING EXPERTS

**Ann-Katrin Gässlein**, Representative for Culture and Education Catholic Church SG, Interreligious Dialogue Switzerland, St.Gallen; **Florian Vetsch**, Philosophy Teacher and Poet, St.Gallen; **Maja Dörig**, City Parliamentarian, St.Gallen; **Peter Olibet**, Co-President SP St. Gallen and City Parliamentarian, St.Gallen; **Susanne Bickel**, Egyptology Professor Uni Basel.

## FIRST SIGNATORY

**Adolf Muschg**, author; **Andrea Thal**, Artistic Director, Contemporary Image Collective - CIC; **Angela Kuratli**, curator, art historian; **Anita Zimmermann**, artist; **Anja und Olaf Räderer**, history of ideas of hermetic philosophy; **Anna Vetsch**, art historian; **Annette Bossart**, integration specialist; **Annette Hug**, author; **Bénédicte Savoy**, art historian and professor of art history; **Benjamin von Blomberg**, co-director; **Bettina Spoerri & Anne Wieser**, publishers Geparden Verlag; **Bettina Surber**, parliamentary group president Cantonal Council St. Gallen; **Cems Bond**, inclusion agent; **Charlotte Küng-Bless**, Catholic theologian; **Christian Hörler**, sculptor, board member visarte ost; **Christine Lötscher**, editor Geschichte der Gegenwart and literary critic; **Christoph Büchel**, artist; **Christoph Keller**, author; **Clemens Umbricht**, poet; **Corinne Riedener**, editor of the cultural magazine Saiten; **Dana Grigorcea**, writer; **Dani Fels**, lecturer; **Daniel Graf**, democracy activist, Public Beta; **Dominique Künzle**, philosophy lecturer; **Elisabeth Bronfen**, professor; **Erich Keller**, historian; **Esther Hungerbühler**, cultural worker, St.Gallen; **Etrit Hasler**, slam poet, managing director Suisseculture Sociale; **Felix Lehner**, founder and managing director Kunstgiesserei St. Gallen; **Gaby Fierz**, ethnologist and curator; **Georg Gatsas**, artist; **Gesine Krüger**, professor, focus on colonial history and restitution; **Giovanni Carmine**, director Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen; **Heba Abd el Gawad**, Egyptologist, initiator of "Egypt's dispersed Heritage"; **Jacques Erlanger**, cultural mediator; **Jakob Tanner**, historian; **Jakob Vetsch**, pastor; **Jan Heller Levi**, poet; **Jean Ziegler**, sociologist; **Johannes M. Hediger**, curator and artist; **Jonas Knecht**, drama director Theater St. Gallen; **Josef Felix Müller**, publisher, author; **Katalin Deér**, artist; **Kim de l'Horizon**; **Klaus Henner Russius**, actor; **Klemens Wempe**, Soul Gallen DJ; **Laura de Weck**, author; **Maja Dörig**, city parliamentarian St. Gallen; **Marc Jenny**, musician, publisher; **Marina Widmer**, sociologist, Culture Prize of the City of St.Gallen 2022; **Mattea Meyer**, National Councilor and Co-President SP Switzerland; **Maya Alban-Zapata**, actress; **Micha Lewinsky**, director; **Michael Festl**, philosophy professor University of St. Gallen; **Michael Neuenschwander**, actor; **Miriam Schöb**, cabaret artist; **Monika Dommann**, professor of history; **Nicola Schneider**, literary critic; **Nicolas Stemann**, co-director; **Nicole Reinhard**, cinema director; **Nina Burri**, international law expert; **Ntando Cele**, artist; **Odilia Hiller**, journalist; **Paul Rechsteiner**, politician; **Pedro Lenz**, writer; **Perikles Monioudis**, writer; **Peter und Susi Frischknecht**, interior designers; **Peter Schneider**, psychoanalyst and author; **Peter Stamm**, writer; **Peter Z. Herzog**, artist; **Philip Ursprung**, professor of art and architectural history; **Rachel Braunschweig**, actress; **Rahel Leupin**, cultural scientist; **Raphael Urweider**, writer; **Robert Hunger-Bühler**, actor; **Roger de Weck**, author; **Sabine Gisiger**, filmmaker; **Sandra Meier**, Director KinoK; **Sandro Lunin**, Artistic Director Kaserne Basel; **Severin Rohrer**, winner of the gold medal of the Swiss Philosophy Olympiad 2020; **Shirana Shahbazi**, artist; **Sibylle Berg**, author; **Sina Wider**, professor; **Silvia Maag**, department integration St.Gallen; **Sophie Witt**, professor; **Stefan Keller**, historian; **Stefan Manser-Egli**, migration researcher, co-president Operation Libero; **Susanna Kulli**, gallery owner, cultural prize winner of the St. Galler Kulturstiftung 2021; **Sven Bösigler**, musician; **Sylvia Sasse**, professor of Slavic studies and cultural scientist; **Thomas Stahr**, Chief Financial Officer; **Thomas Strässle**, President Max Frisch Foundation; **Tine Milz**, Co-Director Neumarkt Theater; **Tobias Hagmann**, Professor University of Roskilde; **Uriel Orlow**, artist; **Ursina Lardi**, actress; **Vića Mitrović**, City Parliamentarian St.Gallen; **Yuvikki Diah**, Agent for Diversity.