Hay Festival *Segovia*

10 — 13
September 2026

Report



Hay Festival President Stephen Fry

Contents

Hay Festival Segovia 2026	4
The programme in detail	9
Books: Words that endure	21
The beauty of reality	27
Young people	31
Geopolitics	32
Special projects: Vulnerable groups	36
Global projects	39
The Festival in numbers	44
The Festival in the media	47
Thanks	50
Hay Festival around the world	53

Hay Festival Segovia 2026
21st edition

There are places where culture is observed. And there are places where culture is lived. In September 2026, Segovia once again became one of the latter.

For six days, the city opened its streets, squares, historic buildings and cultural venues to bring together writers, artists, thinkers and thousands of readers from around the world across more than 60 events.

This 21st edition was shaped by a theme of particular significance – the search for beauty – with Segovia acting both as the setting and as a protagonist in that search.

In a world dominated by immediacy, haste and superficiality, the festival championed beauty in the Greek sense – not merely as an aesthetic experience, but as a way of relating to the world; one that requires time, sensitivity and openness.

Stephen Fry, President of Hay Festival, actor, writer and director, captivated a huge audience. He built a bridge between the ancient Greek world and the present day, arguing that Greek mythology explains almost everything humanity needs to understand. He compared AI – "a new fire" – to the myth of the Titan Prometheus and his struggle with Zeus.

In Stephen's words: "We are the Prometheans of our age. Let us remember that Zeus was right: when technology reaches human beings, they cease to need Zeus."

The result was an enormously successful edition: a vibrant celebration of culture, ideas and human connection, reflected in exceptionally positive media coverage.

Because, ultimately, searching for beauty means searching for that which still deserves our attention, our imagination and our hope.

And that is why Hay Festival did not simply come to Segovia. For a few days, Segovia became Hay Festival.

"I am very proud to be the President of Hay Festival, and we love seeing these kinds of initiatives emerge in different places. Segovia is a wonderful place to hold the festival. There, I will talk about my adventures with Greek mythology, something I have always loved and been fascinated by."

Stephen Fry, Hay Festival President

"The world is changing faster than ever and requires us to seek common solutions. This year's Hay Festival Segovia aims to address these challenges with determination and hope, celebrating new ideas and the power of storytelling to improve our lives."

Julie Finch, CEO, Hay Festival Global

"This year we celebrate beauty not merely as an aesthetic concept, but by reclaiming its Greek meaning – Kalós – to defend peace and harmony as a way of relating to the world, one that requires time, sensitivity and an open mind."

Sheila Cremaschi, Director, Hay Festival Spain



Juan Bravo Theatre




LA VANGUARDIA






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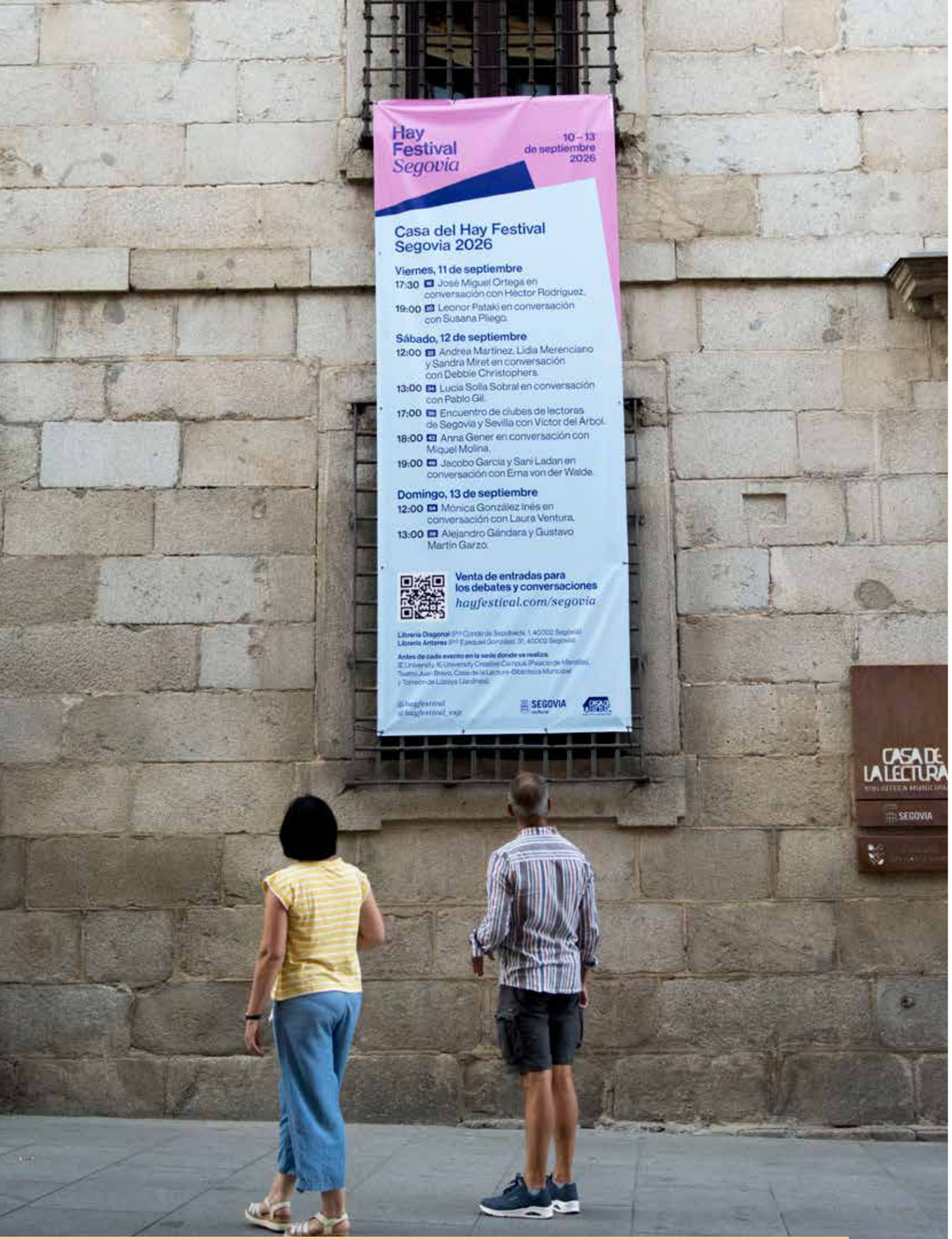



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Passers-by reading the programme at Casa de la Lectura

The programme in detail

The 21st edition of Hay Festival Segovia offered a programme that went beyond the sum of its activities and the significance of its guests.

The programme unfolded across 12 different venues in the city of Segovia:

- Segovia Public Library
- Juan Bravo Theatre
- Plaza Mayor
- the Alhóndiga
- the Casa de la Lectura
- the Chapel of the Esteban Vicente Museum
- the Hermitage of San Juan
- Segovia Prison
- the two IE University venues in Segovia (Santa Cruz la Real and the Palacio Mansilla)
- the two spaces at the Torreón de Lozoya (the stables and the garden)
- plus one venue in Madrid, the AT Fundación Telefónica Space.

The Banco Sabadell Foundation provided advisory support to the Festival in creating the guiding theme – the search for beauty. In a context dominated by speed and immediacy, this edition of the Festival championed something seemingly simple but increasingly necessary: time to look, listen, talk and think.

A/CE (Acción Cultural Española) was joined by the UK Embassy, the Embassy of the Netherlands and the IE Creative Center at Palacio Mansilla – all of these organisations contributed valuable suggestions, which met with great success.

Where beauty begins with a gaze

Spirituality, silence and inner beauty

Pablo d'Ors presented spirituality and meditation as ways of transforming our way of seeing. Silence and stillness allow us to step away from the noise of everyday life, understand reality better and discover a beauty that is often hidden by the pace of life. **Fernando Rodríguez Lafuente** and **Sonia Mulero** also took part in the reflection on stillness, listening and inner peace.

Living the life we want

Hwang Bo-Reum reflected on the need to move away from a life imposed on us and decide how we want to live. In conversation with **Catalina Tejero**, she addressed exhaustion, loneliness, friendship, community and the power of books. Beauty is linked to a more conscious and humane life, in which literature and relationships help to rebuild connections.

The beauty of cities

Anna Gener, in conversation with **Miquel Molina**, explored the relationship between beauty, the city and wellbeing. They argued for taking time to observe urban beauty and question the priority given to usefulness over beauty. The conversation championed a way of seeing that can recognise what improves our wellbeing, even when it has no immediate practical use.

Caravaggio: Beauty, art and transformation

Jaime de los Santos spoke with **Sonia Mulero** about Caravaggio's work and its ability to challenge us, raise questions and transform personal experience. The dialogue connects art, thought and human experience.

The contemplation of beauty

Nazareth Castellanos, a leading figure in neuroscience communication in Spain, invited audiences to discover how the contemplation of beauty influences our brain and our biology. In conversation with **Carmen Delibes**, Director of Segovia Public Library, she shared her research into the relationship between perception, well-being and self-understanding.
































The making of beauty

The world of Cristóbal Balenciaga

Javier Echeverría Sola and **Nerea Pallares**, in a conversation chaired by **Enrique de Santiago**, reflected on the world of Cristóbal Balenciaga. His work champions craftsmanship, tradition and meticulous work. Beauty emerges as a process that requires time and dedication, connecting fashion, literature and artisanal creation.

Beauty, identity and experimentation

Viktor&Rolf represent contemporary fashion based on experimentation, glamour and irony. Their work questions conventions surrounding beauty, identity and luxury, turning creation into a way of breaking established codes. Together with **Benedetta Poletti** and **Ines Quesada**, they reflected on how, for more than three decades, they have continued to redefine the cultural relevance of fashion.

Craftsmanship, sensitivity and the human dimension

Mercedes de Miguel, **Corisande Albert** and **Belén Llamas Ferrier** reflected on the revival of craftsmanship and manual work. They championed the beauty of imperfection, sensitivity and authentic feelings in the face of the saturation of industrial consumption and virtual relationships.

Heritage and the cultural construction of beauty

Adam Lowe, director of Factum Arte, addressed heritage and the cultural conventions that determine what we consider beautiful. He is internationally recognised for his pioneering work in the conservation of cultural heritage and the development of new rematerialisation techniques. Accompanied by the British Ambassador to Spain, **Sir Alex Ellis**, and chaired by **Sol Costales**, he examined specific cases to offer a critical perspective on the historical and cultural construction of beauty.

Spaces of creation

Authorship and shared creation

Laura Martínez de Guereñu offered a critical view of architectural creation and the traditional idea of the individual author. In connection with her book on Lilly Reich and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, she spoke with **Niklas Maak** about the importance of collective work and of the narratives that determine how we understand works and their authors.

Museums as living cultural institutions

Ben van Berkel, Sheikha Reem Al-Thani, Manuela Lucà-Dazio and **David Goodman** analysed the transformation of museums into open, evolving cultural institutions. The museum is no longer merely a place of conservation and exhibition, but also becomes a space for encounter, knowledge, participation and cultural transformation.

Where words become shelter

Poetry is presented as a privileged way of approaching beauty.

Leonor Pataki, the young winner of the 38th Loewe Foundation International Poetry Prize, took part alongside **Susana Pliego**. She also joined the traditional poetry reading in the garden of the Torreón de Lozoya. The poet and writer **José Félix Valdivieso** acted as master of ceremonies and once again created one of the festival's most magical moments.

Thomas Schlesser, together with **Elena Garrigues**, championed the unexpected power of poetry, which can change our relationship with words, beauty and life. **Zelie Perpignaa** introduced them.

An uplifting gathering centred on Saint John of the Cross, with **Leonor Pataki**, **Raquel Lanseros**, **José María Muñoz Quirós** and **Carlos Aganzo** as minstrels. They read poems while walking through places associated with the poet of all saints: the Cave, the orchards and the Hermitage of the convent of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers.

The story of Spanish music would be incomplete without mentioning **Ramoncín**. Carrying a backpack full of experience of music, life and culture, this icon of Spanish rock spoke with **Santiago Herrero**, a diplomat and cultural activist. The result? A glimpse behind the scenes, with its lights and shadows, through the eyes of its protagonists.



IE University event



Audience at IE University event



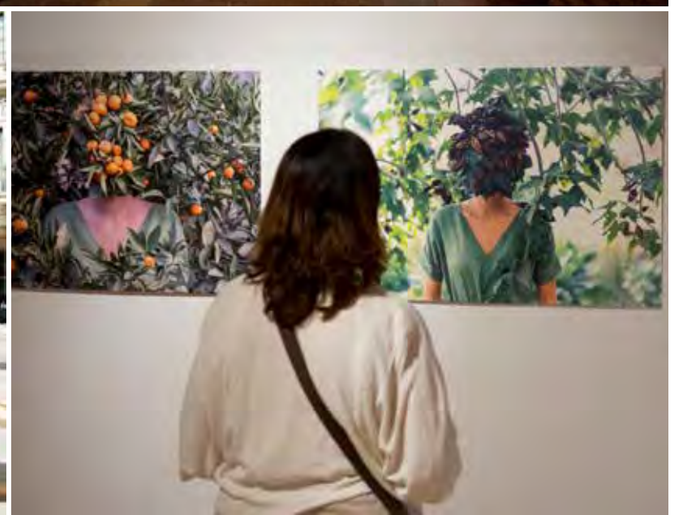












Where creation takes shape

The festival included four visual arts proposals intended to question our relationship with the world.

A dialogue between **Hubertus von Hohenlohe** and **Hernán Cortés**, two artists linked by portraiture, brought together different languages and ways of representing reality which, far from opposing one another, revealed complementary approaches to contemporary representation.

Hernán Cortés, working in painting, is a master of portraiture: sober, restrained, simply unique.

Through photography, Hubertus von Hohenlohe presented vibrant images constructed from multiple visual references. At the same time, he presented the photography exhibition ‘Fama everybody’ at the Alhóndiga in Segovia, where his self-portraits can be recognised in an urban setting, anticipating the rise of the selfie. The artist, always with his Leica camera around his neck, is like a flâneur who seeks and at the same time finds himself in the reflections of the street. **Sema D’Acosta** curated the exhibition.

In the chapel of the Esteban Vicente Museum, an exhibition entitled ‘Intruso’, organised by the Aida Foundation, was presented featuring the painter **Patricia Azcárate**, the sculptor **Guillem Salas** and the stage designer **Alfonso Gargallo**. It explores the immigrant who overcomes his fears in order to find a better future, one of the realities at the forefront of current geopolitical debate.

Olana Light explored belonging, identity and space through a photography exhibition, ‘Searching for a place to belong’, and a performance, ‘The birch tree family’. The artist became a living birch-tree sculpture that walked through the streets of Segovia, catching the attention of passers-by.

David Lindo, known as ‘the Urban Birder’, brought the perspective of nature and observation into a dialogue with **Irene Hernández Velasco**.

An exhibition of Manila shawls represented the need to preserve and pass on craft traditions and the creation of a collective art object. It was held in the stables of the Torreón de Lozoya, curated by the collector **Verónica Durán Castello**.

The enduring relevance of Classics

Stephen Fry reflected on the enduring relevance of Greek myths and their ability to continue to fascinate and raise questions in the present.

‘Mad About Rome’, about the beauty of classical Rome – which is central rather than decorative – was explored in an unforgettable, passionate conversation between the writer and Latinist **Emilio del Río**, who spoke almost as if he lived there, and the poet and journalist **Carlos Aganzo**.

Two great figures of Spanish literature, **Alejandro Gándara** and **Gustavo Martín Garzo**, also discussed the unhurried gaze of the Classics, which continue to be a source of inspiration in today’s whirlwind.

ΚΑΛΛΟΣ: Ritual for Aphrodite and Eros

ΚΑΛΛΟΣ, directed by **Chryssa Georganta**, presented the beauty of Ancient Greece as a lived experience combining philosophy, ritual and stage creation. The hymns of Sappho and the Orphic hymns, the harp, incense and audiovisual elements created a symbolic setting. The performance sought to turn theoretical reflection into experience, showing that beauty can not only be analysed, but also felt and contemplated. The ritual invited reflection on Eros, Harmony and the essence of beauty through the classical tradition.















Madrid, Fundación Telefónica space



The garden of Torreón de Lozoya

Books: Words that endure

Every book is an open door; every conversation an invitation to look a little beyond the familiar. And perhaps it is in this subtle shift of perspective that the true journey of literature begins, along with the beauty we are still capable of discovering in the world.

Manuel Vilas: Iceland is also a Warm Country

In conversation with **Ana Gavín**, **Manuel Vilas** ventured into the landscapes of his latest novel, where life and fiction intertwine with memory, the end of a love affair and the arrival of a friendship. In Vilas's writing, vulnerability is not a defeat, but a way of carrying on with life. *Event 42*

Manuel Jabois: The Family as a Crossroads

Drawing on *La víspera*, **Manuel Jabois**, alongside **Miguel Barreiro**, explored this first universe to which we all belong: the place where we learn to love, where our contradictions also take shape, and to which, in one way or another, we always return. The audience was captivated throughout. *Event 48*

Diego de Alcázar Benjumea: On Slowing Down and Hurrying

In conversation with **Carlos Franganillo**, **Diego de Alcázar Benjumea** reflected on the pause and the rush as ways of relating to the world, before an enthusiastic audience. The idea of returning can mean going back to a place, reconnecting with a part of oneself or discovering that time has transformed what we once believed to be untouched. *Event 30*

Reading in a world of immediacy

CEDRO (the Spanish Reproduction Rights Centre) has for the past twenty years organised an annual event at Hay Festival Segovia. At the 2026 edition CEDRO curated an event with writer and journalist **Javier Sierra**. Alongside **Vicente Alcañiz** and **Mar Domínguez**, in a conversation chaired by **Jorge Corrales**, the writer took part in a discussion about changes in our reading habits, the influence of social media and the role of education. And how reading makes us reflect on beauty and pain, emotion, knowledge and worlds that would sometimes be inaccessible were it not for books.

Lorenzo Silva, Marta Robles and Rosa Ribas: The Art of Intrigue

In conversation with **Ana Gavín**, three leading voices in crime fiction explored, before a packed theatre, the mechanisms of suspense and the creation of characters who inhabit the margins of the law, morality and society. Beneath the surface of mystery, there is always a deeper question about ourselves. *Event 57*















Marta Jiménez Serrano and Nerea Pérez de las Heras: From Personal Experience to Literature

Drawing on *Oxígeno* and *Fantasma* respectively, both writers began with personal experiences to move beyond autobiography. In a packed convent, before an attentive and enthusiastic audience, they showed how the intimate can become literary material, allowing individual experience to find a way of engaging with others. *Event 55*

José Miguel Ortega: History Through Human Eyes

In conversation with **Héctor Rodríguez**, **José Miguel Ortega** explored how the historical novel opens a window onto the past without merely reconstructing events or presenting a succession of dates. Instead, it restores their human dimension, bringing the people behind history back into view. *Event 16*

Mónica González Inés: Making Peace With Who We Are

In conversation with **Laura Ventura**, the writer invited us to look differently at our imperfections and the bonds that sustain us. In contrast to the rush and obsession with achieving a flawless life, she offered the possibility of pausing, listening and reconciling ourselves with who we are. *Event 54*

Rodrigo Cortés: The Beauty and Unsettling Power of Language

The acclaimed writer and filmmaker **Rodrigo Cortés**, in conversation with **Jesús García Calero**, writer and editor of *ABC Cultural*, explored the origins of the two voices in his latest book, bringing together tradition and popular culture in a vision of beauty that is always imbued with the unsettling power of language. Cortés has established himself as one of the most independent-minded and distinctive writers on the contemporary literary scene. *Event 49*

Lucía Solla Sobral made her mark on contemporary literature with *Comerás flores* (2025), her debut novel, which established her as one of the most prominent emerging voices of her generation. She spoke with **Pablo Gil**, journalist and Culture Editor at *El Mundo*, about her literary experience and the impact of her debut. Awarded the 2025 El Ojo Crítico Prize for Fiction by Spain's National Radio (RTVE), the novel also achieved extraordinary commercial success. It has sold 200,000 copies and is due to be published in 18 countries.

Other geographies, other lives

Speakers from the United Kingdom predominated, dazzling audiences with various events and performances. The festival featured events with **Adam Loewe, Sir Alex Ellis, Olana Light, David Lindo, Gary Knight, David Sharrock, Helena de Bertodano, Frederick Studerman, Corisande Albert, Debbie Christophers** and **Stephen Fry**.

British novelist **Jessica Andrews** reflected with **Cristina Ward** on identity, social class, gender and the body, themes that run through her novels *Saltwater* and *Milk Teeth*. Her writing examines how our surroundings, family history and social circumstances shape the way we inhabit the world. The result? Several hundred students utterly captivated by her words.

French participants

French writer **Mathias Enard** spoke with **Helena de Bertodano** about his work, which weaves together memory, travel and literary essay. The landscapes he traverses are not merely geographical: they are also moral territories, spaces where the traces of history accumulate alongside questions of identity. From this perspective, travelling means drawing closer to other lives and discovering that places hold memories that predate us. *Event 60*

Thomas Schlesser joined in for another poetry event; both events were presented by **Zélie Perpignaa**, an expert in cultural mediation and attaché for Books, the Exchange of Ideas, and Media Libraries at the Institut Français in Spain.

German participants

The festival's launch in Segovia took place on Thursday 10 September, and was dedicated to Germany. Participants include previously mentioned architects **Niklas Maak** and **Ben van Berkel**, as well as **Michael Trabitzsch**, joined by **Nelio Budermann**, **Antonia Blau** and **Peter Sloterdijk**.

Nelio Biedermann: An Overwhelming Past

Accompanied by **Antonia Blau** and in conversation with journalist **Irene Hernández Velasco**, the young Swiss writer took the audience into a family saga shaped by the splendour and decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In his novel *Lázár*, palaces and works of art coexist with death, destruction and wounds that span generations. **Nelio Biedermann** reconstructs a vanished world without concealing its most disturbing aspects. Family memory thus becomes a mirror of European history: an inheritance in which beauty and tragedy remain inseparably intertwined, like two sides of the same memory.

Europe's Intellectual and Cultural Challenges

Peter Sloterdijk – undoubtedly one of the great living philosophers whose controversial views fuel essential debates – engaged in a dialogue in the first part of the event, with **Santiago Íñiguez de Onzoño**, President of the IE University. He was portrayed by the *Financial Times* as "one of the most significant figures in promoting European business schools internationally," on the major intellectual and cultural challenges of our time.

The discussion began with 'The Continent Without Qualities', Sloterdijk's latest essay, a lucid reflection on Europe's loss of political and spiritual horizon and on the tensions between technology, culture, and democracy in the 21st century.

In the second part of the event, three students from IE University: **Carmen Jimenez**, **Mar González** and **Lukas Baumgartner**, members of the IE European Union Club, joined the conversation in an exercise in intergenerational dialogue that highlighted the voices of young people and their role in building a shared future.




























The beauty of reality

The Stringer and the search for truth

The screening of the documentary *The Stringer*, directed by Bao Nguyen and produced by acclaimed Netflix documentary-maker Gary Knight, examined authorship, truth and the ethics of photojournalism through a photograph associated with the Vietnam War.

One of the world's leading photojournalists, **Gary Knight**, and **Borja Santos Porras**, Vice Dean of IE School of Politics, Economics and Global Affairs, provided context for the film. Inspired by the questions raised in *The Stringer*, next day a second conversation brought them together again, this time with international correspondent **Anna Bosch**. They explored its relevance in the face of disinformation and reflected on the power of images, on-the-ground journalism and the responsibility involved in documenting conflicts.

The unvarnished beauty of facts

Manuel Jabois (*El País*), **Ketty Garat** (*ABC*) and **David Mejía** (*El Mundo*), chaired by **Teodoro León Gross** (Channel SUR), discussed the value of facts, simplicity and clarity in journalism in the face of post-truth and narcissistic narratives. The four high-flying journalists offered four distinct or alternative perspectives, but in the naked truth there beats a singular beauty and an inexhaustible sense of wonder. The event sparked great interest, and the speakers did not disappoint.

TikTok: The end of common sense?

Michael Trabitzsch and **Lorenzo de' Medici** analysed how social media platforms such as TikTok challenge verifiable knowledge and the role of institutions in a democracy. The conversation contrasted considered, evidence-based reflection with the noise of fleeting content.

Journalism as a society's collective memory

On the 50th anniversary of Spanish national newspaper *El País*, **Javier Cercas** revisited a collective adventure marked by the defence of freedoms, the vocation for independence, and the conviction that journalism remains an essential tool for understanding reality.

In a conversation with journalist **Margaryta Yakovenko**, he offered a personal view on the fifty years of *El País* and, at the same time, on the construction of democratic Spain. Far from being an institutional chronicle, the writer traces the story of a reader who has followed the newspaper since its origins and who is also part of it as a contributor.

The ongoing technological revolution, spurred on by the rapid development of artificial intelligence, has forever changed journalism. That is why, for the second year in a row, the fictional newspaper *Europa Tribune* opened its newsroom to offer a live look at how a news outlet's front page is decided. Building on this, they undertook a journalistic forecasting exercise to explore which of them could shape the future of the continent.

The guests joining this editorial roundtable were: **Martin Dahms**, correspondent for the *Frankfurter Rundschau* and the *Stuttgarter Zeitung*; **Helena de Bertodano**, reporter for the *Sunday Times*; **David Sharrock**, a contributor to *The Times*; and **Miquel Molina**, deputy editor of *La Vanguardia*.

Nuria García Arenas, design editor-in-chief at *La Vanguardia*, was responsible for capturing this debate on paper. This exercise in journalistic striptease was presented by **Sheila Cremaschi**, director of Hay Festival Spain, member of the jury for the 2026 Princess of Asturias Award for Literature, and recipient of the 2026 British Council UK-Spain Award for Lifetime Achievement in Bridging Cultures, and **Sonia Mulero**, general director of the Banco Sabadell Foundation and one of Spain's top 100 women leaders.

Project organised by Fundación Telefonica, Fundacion Banco Sabadell and La Vanguardia at Telefonica space in Madrid.











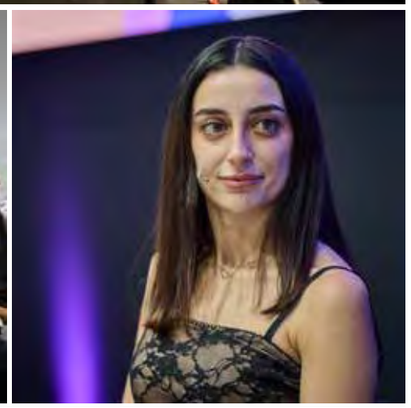






















Young people

As part of Hay Festival's philosophy, offering activities for young audiences was also a priority. These aimed to awaken interest in art and culture, encourage the development of critical thinking, and give space and a voice to emerging young talent making their mark on the literary and cultural scene.

One such speaker was Swiss writer **Nelio Biedermann**. At the age of 22, the writer, who studied German Language and Literature and Film at the University of Zurich, took Germany by storm with *Lázár*, which is now published in 20 countries, including Spain.

Authors who are seen as essential reading and are followed by tens of thousands of readers included **Alba Zamora**, **CA Todorova** and **Eva Mayro**, who took part in an engaging discussion on the rise of romantic fantasy. Writers and communicators **Andrea Martínez**, **Lidia Merenciano** and **Sandra Miret** also joined **Debbie Christophers** to bring the voices of silenced women to light.

To hear the perspectives of younger generations, Hay Festival Segovia hosted a project by students from **Design Studio 5**. On the musical front, the **Big Band**, together with the **Choir and Symphony Orchestra**, made up of current and former pupils of **Colegio Británico de Madrid**, delighted the audience with their traditional concert.

Geopolitics

Shifting horizons: Europe, conflict and the search for a common future

Hay Festival Segovia addressed the political, social and environmental challenges of our time, creating space to consider major geopolitical conflicts and Europe's role in international relations.

Europe in a world of rivalries

Two leading analysts with first-hand experience of the international relations landscape, **José María de Areilza** and **Fidel Sendagorta**, examined Europe's position in a world shaped by growing geopolitical rivalries. The pursuit of global prosperity that had characterised the three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall had given way to the imperative of security, increasingly understood in national and expansive terms. Their conversation explored how Europe could navigate a world for which it was not fully prepared, strengthen its strategic autonomy, build closer alliances and defend its interests and values.

War and journalism

The programme also addressed Gaza, Ukraine and war journalism.

The anthology *Palestina* is everywhere. Presented in collaboration with TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, an event featured **Mahmoud al-Shaer** and **Muhammad al-Zaqzouq**, directors of *28 Magazine*, and reflected on life amid a suspended war and the devastating reality in Gaza. The conversation was chaired by **Gloria Habsburg**, one of the editors of the anthology.

The festival also welcomed Ukrainian writer **Margaryta Yakovenko**, who emigrated to Spain at the age of 7 with her parents, leaving her loved ones behind in Ukraine. Together with **Jesus Garcia Calero**, a journalist and one of Spain's leading experts in cultural outreach, she explored the last century of a region that has been particularly turbulent. She drew on her latest work, *Ocupación*, which serves as a reckoning with her past.



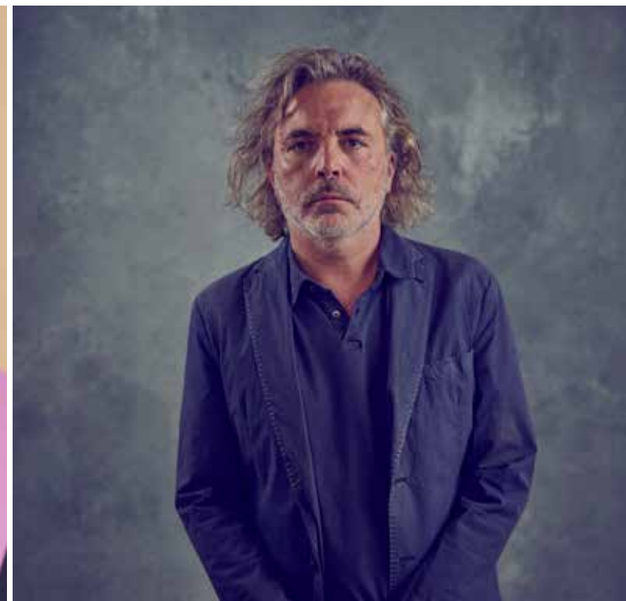






















FT Weekend Debates: Europe's future and competitiveness

Two *FT Weekend* Debates explored Europe's political direction and its ability to respond to global challenges. The events were co-organised with the IE Foundation.

In 'Europe's Future', **Arancha González Laya**, former Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs and author of *Solos en el mundo: Estados Unidos amenaza, Rusia hace la guerra, China reconstruye un imperio… ¿Y Europa?* and **Catherine de Vries**, author of the forthcoming *How Europe Survives*, spoke with **Frederick Studemann**, Literary Editor of the *Financial Times*. A thought-provoking conversation about the future of Europe, the changing global order and the ideas that will shape the decades ahead.

'Europe at Different Speeds: Competing in the Age of Innovation' brought **Enrico Letta**, former Prime Minister of Italy, Dean of IE School of Politics, Economics and Global Affairs, and author of a landmark report on the future of the European Single Market, together with **Amparo Moraleda**, now Airbus Board Chairwoman, one of Europe's leading business and industrial voices, in conversation with **Frederick Studemann**, Literary Editor of the *Financial Times*. Together they explored how Europe can strengthen its competitiveness in an era defined by artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, defence, research and innovation.

Special projects
Vulnerable groups

Beyond the quality of the programme and the prestige of its guests, Hay Festival Segovia places particular emphasis on initiatives that promote access to culture for the most vulnerable groups and/or those at risk of social exclusion. In 2026 once again the festival broke down physical, emotional, cultural and intellectual barriers to involve the public in an inspiring gathering that offered a transformative experience.

Meeting of women's reading groups from Segovia and Seville

Reading breaks down walls and builds bridges. Co-organised with Acción Cultural Española, AC/E, the José Manuel Lara Foundation and Segovia City Council, and in collaboration with the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, the Reading Club of the Entreamigos Association in Seville's Polígono Sur – better known as the Tres Mil Viviendas neighbourhood, the poorest in Europe – joined forces with rural reading groups in Segovia. As a result of this coming together, in the preceding months both groups read together *Las buenas intenciones* by the writer **Víctor del Árbol** and met in September with the author.

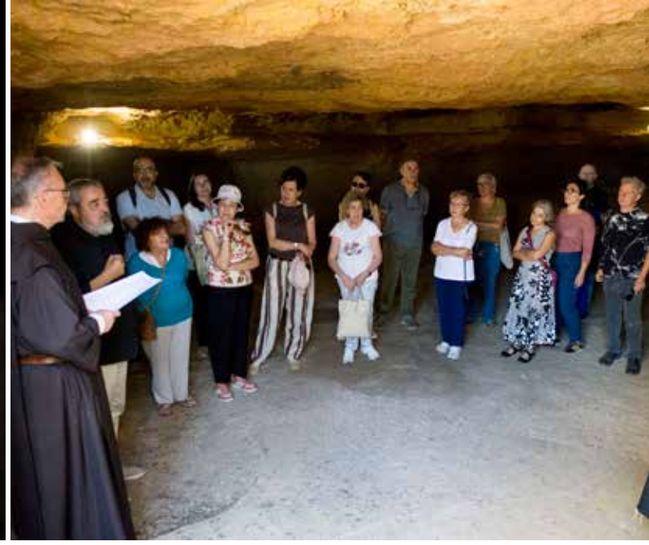
The Seville reading group, made up of women, has met every week for ten years and has embraced reading as a means of personal growth and of escaping situations of material and social vulnerability, demonstrating, with the support of the José Manuel Lara Foundation, the ability of reading to break down walls and build bridges.

Autobiography workshop at Segovia Prison

The 'Mini-Autobiography Workshop' led by **Beltrán Gambier** at Segovia Prison is an annual fixture at Hay Festival Segovia, reaching its seventh edition in 2026.

Beltrán is founder and director of *Intramuros* magazine, which specialises in this genre. He offers inmates the opportunity to take part in an activity of a high literary standard, in which they write an autobiographical fragment of their lives. No academic training is required for this exercise. In addition to Beltrán, the workshop usually involves another writer; on this occasion, **Gervasio Posadas** joined the session.























Global projects

South–North Conversations

Through the South–North Conversations series, Hay Festival seeks to create a space for dialogue among innovative voices from the Global South, sharing different perspectives on the world and non-Western approaches to today's challenges. The initiative is supported by Open Society Foundations (OSF).

Three conversations took place during Hay Festival Segovia 2026: 'Engaño', with Palestinian writer **Adania Shibli**; 'Migraciones asimétricas', with **Jacobo García** and **Sani Ladan**, an international relations expert and committed pan-Africanist; and 'Redes que impulsan comunidades literarias', with **Inmaculada Ballesteros** and **Sonia Faleiro**, on the creation of networks and communities through reading.

Partnership with CAF

CAF – Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean – and Hay Festival partnered to promote and support the region's cultural and creative economies through a series of events.

Three events were held at Hay Festival Segovia 2026: 'La historia y sus emociones', with **José Miguel Ortega** in conversation with **Héctor Rodríguez**; 'Buenos Aires bien vale un tango (o una novela)', with **Martín Caparrós** in conversation with **Jacobo García**; and 'Otras historias del Archivo de Indias', featuring writer **Martín Caparrós**, **Carlos Flores**, Director of the Archivo General de Indias, and **Erna von der Walde**, editor of the anthology, in a conversation chaired by **Cristina Fuentes La Roche**, Hay Festival's International Director.

What the speakers say

Hay Festival Segovia 2026 participants discuss the festival in their own words...

“Contemporary museums are not merely boxes in which beautiful things are displayed; they generate new ‘ecosystems’ around them.”

– Sheikha Reem Al-Thani, senior executive at Qatar Museums, *La Vanguardia*

“The fundamental paradox of modern life is that we all pretend to survive our own lack of meaning.”

– Peter Sloterdijk, *El País Ideas*

“What I wanted to capture is the story of the relationship between a particular reader and the newspaper.”

– Javier Cercas, *El País*

“I’m very excited about taking part. My exhibition of different photographs is about beauty versus vulgarity.”

– Hubertus von Hohenlohe, *Lecturas, El Mundo*

“Raquel Lanseros: ‘The perfect poem? Illuminating, irreplaceable, infinite.’”

– *Babelia (El País)*

“My characters are not nice people. I think that is precisely why they are real.”

– Nelio Biedermann, *El Confidencial*

“I’m interested in what people feel, not just what they see.”

– Ben van Berkel, Dutch architect and founder of UNStudio
El Norte de Castilla

“A debate and dialogue opens up with readers and writers, and we all come away exhilarated. This is where culture becomes visible; it is not an abstraction.”

– Manuel Vilas
Onda Cero Nacional

“Cultural events in smaller places are always better received (...) the Hay Festival helps strengthen the city’s cultural offering.”

– Marta Robles
Onda Cero Nacional

“You can live without art, books or cinema, but not without architecture. It is the best tool for social change.”

– Manuela Lucà-Dazio, director of the Pritzker Prize, *El Mundo La Lectura*

“Anna Gener: Utility and beauty should not be incompatible concepts in architecture.”

– *Cinco Días*



















“I wanted to show that poetry can serve life.”

– Thomas Schlesser, *Zenda Libros*

“People who channel their anger into the AfD will lose money, lose hope and lose their illusions.”

– Peter Sloterdijk, *Ideas supplement (El País)*

“The Manila shawl is an object shaped by three forces: Asia, Latin America and Spain.”

– Verónica Durán, journalist and exhibition curator, *El Adelantado de Segovia*

“We need to slow down and be more connected with nature.”

– Olana Light, *S Moda magazine*

“A good portraitist must decipher what the person being portrayed is hiding.”

– Hernán Cortés, MSN (Spain)

“One can be a great painter and not be a good portraitist, but not the other way around.”

– Hernán Cortés, *El Cultural*

“I’m interested in what people feel and remember, not just what they see. A building should engage both the senses and the mind, and leave a lasting impression on the experience of those who visit or use it.”

– Ben van Berkel, *Expansión*

“Even in this clash of titans between the US and China, Europe has the privilege of behaving more like a spectator than a combatant.”

– Peter Sloterdijk, *El Confidencial*

“There is no more graphic reference to the myth of the cave than the mobile phone.”

– Diego del Alcázar, *El Norte de Castilla*

“The way war journalism is produced goes beyond the imagination.”

– Gary Knight, *Zenda Libros*

“Beauty is a fundamental concept in the Greek worldview: as we seek beauty, we become better people every day.”

– Chryssa Georganta, El Confidencial.es

“My first memory of summer is feeling bored during the afternoon siesta.”

– Nazareth Castellanos, Público.es

“Returning the Black Paintings to their context is not a historicist whim, but an act of aesthetic justice. Goya conceived those works to decorate his villa, not to be hung on a white wall.”

– Adam Lowe

The Festival in numbers

Hay Festival Segovia 2026 offered a 50-day programme featuring five visual arts exhibitions, seven performances at Plaza Mayor, and a concert with 18,500 attendees.

5 days

61 events

150 speakers

7,500 attendees

15 nationalities

Spain, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland, South Korea, Palestine, Argentina, Ukraine, United States, Qatar, Greece and Colombia

12 venues in Segovia, plus one in Madrid

IE University – Aula Magna, Refectory, IE Creative Campus (Palacio Mansilla), and the Santa Cruz la Real campus; Segovia Municipal Library (Casa de la Lectura); Segovia Public Library; Juan Bravo Theatre; San Juan Hermitage; Torreón de Lozoya; 'Alhóndiga' Cultural Centre; Esteban Vicente Chapel; the Hermitage of San Juan de la Cruz Convent of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers; and the Fundación Telefónica Space in Madrid

Social media followers – Hay Festival Segovia 15 August to 21 September 2026

Students gaining free entry to events **2,540**

Accumulated monthly advertising value equivalent **€6,328,066**

OTS audience **883,411,563**

Press hits (plus 322 articles and interviews) **1,220**

Website visits **1,500,000**

Hay Festival Global Social media followers **95 million**

Hay Festival Global Audience impact **1,560,432,000**

Followers on Instagram Hay Festival España **624,014**

Posts on Instagram (plus 241k Reels and 166k Stories) **1.4 million**

Followers on X Hay Festival España **538,403**

Impressions on LinkedIn **6.8k**

Views on Facebook (with an average audience split of 51.9% non-followers vs 48.1% followers) **250k**

Followers on Facebook Hay Festival España **98,171**

Followers on LinkedIn Hay Festival España **2,000**



Peter Sloterdijk and Santiago Iñiguez de Onzoño



Audience at a Festival event

The Festival in the media

"Beauty upon beauty. Hay Festival Segovia embraces this idea: how and why beauty makes the world better, and why it should be imposed on what is immediate and superficial," reported *La Vanguardia* in its coverage of this year's event.

"Festival of Beauty in Segovia, with a great turnout."

– *Cadena SER, La Ventana*

"As summer ends, the cultural calendar returns with one of its unmissable events: the 21st edition of Hay Festival Segovia."

– *ABC*

"Hay Festival Segovia returns, an international gathering."

– *Time Out*

"Hay Festival Segovia designs the front page of an imaginary European newspaper in Madrid. Fundación Telefónica hosted a debate among journalists about the day's most important news."

– *La Vanguardia*

"Beauty takes over Segovia."

– *MSN*

"Nearly 10,000 people show their support for Hay Festival Segovia."

– *El Norte de Castilla*

"More dangerous than fascism – why national populism is putting Europe's future at risk, according to acclaimed Spanish author Javier Cercas."

– *The Olive Press*

"Hay Festival Segovia will champion beauty over the immediate and the superficial. The event revisits the Greek meaning of the term to advocate a thoughtful pause and active listening."

– *El Confidencial*

"Segovia renews its date with beauty and the culture of Hay Festival."

– *El Adelantado de Segovia*

"Beauty will take centre stage at the 21st Hay Festival Segovia."

– *La Razón*

"A festival classic: Beltrán Gambier's autobiography workshop at Segovia prison, which this year welcomes Gervasio Posadas as a guest."

– *El Norte de Castilla*

“A highlight here is the event on Caravaggio’s work, exploring issues such as love, fragility and the search for meaning.”

– ABC

“A cultural event Eugenia Martínez de Irujo did not want to miss; she attended the opening of this very special project for her friend Hubertus von Hohenlohe.”

– Vanitatis

“Ortega examines how the historical novel makes it possible to reconstruct the past, not only through events, dates and characters, but also through the emotions and experiences of those who lived in other eras.”

– Europa Press

“September unfolds among books, ideas, beauty and conversations capable of shifting a city’s grid. Hay Festival looks beyond the rush and proposes seeking what endures.”

– Elle magazine

“The most beautiful and complete poetry pays tribute to Saint John of the Cross on the centenary of his being named a Doctor of the Church, at the Segovia convent that bears his name.”

– El Norte de Castilla

“Hay Festival: an ‘oasis’ for thinking about beauty in a moment of ‘madness and falsehood’.”

– Diario ABC

“For this weekend, we recommend a unique getaway to Segovia, where Hay Festival has just begun. One of the most varied and interesting literary festivals around.”

– La Linterna de Cadena COPE

“Beauty takes over Hay Festival Segovia.”

– La Vanguardia



Hernan Cortes and Hubertus von Hohenlohe



The opening of ‘Fama Everybody’ at the Alhóndiga

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National Poet of Wales Hanan Issa at Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye, Wales, UK

Hay Festival around the world

Hay Festival Global is a charity providing global festivals of stories, ideas and new possibilities.

The antidote to polarisation, we bring together diverse voices to listen, talk, debate and create, tackling some of the biggest political, social and environmental challenges of our time. Through one-of-a-kind festivals, in unique locations around the world – plus forums, digital platforms and learning programmes – Hay Festival Global celebrates and inspires different views, perspectives and points of view.

In 1987, Hay Festival Global was dreamt up in the booktown of Hay-on-Wye, Wales. Thirty-nine years later, the charity runs events and projects all over the world, from the historic town of Cartagena in Colombia to the heart of cities in Peru, Mexico, Spain and the USA.

Hay Festival Global reaches an audience of millions each year and continues to grow and innovate, earning multiple awards over the years, including Festival of Sanctuary status from refugee charity City of Sanctuary UK and, in 2020, Spain's Princess of Asturias Award in Communication and Humanities.

Coming up...

Hay Festival Arequipa, Peru
5–8 November 2026

Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye Winter Weekend, Wales
26–29 November 2026

Hay Festival Jericó, Colombia
22–24 January 2027

Hay Festival Forum Medellín, Colombia
26–27 January 2027

Hay Festival Cartagena de Indias, Colombia 28–31 January 2027

Nairobi Litfest, Kenya
7–9 May 2027

Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye, Wales
27 May–6 June 2027

Hay Festival Kunstsilo, Norway
5–8 August 2027

Hay Festival Querétaro, Mexico
3–5 September 2027

Hay Festival Segovia, Spain
9–12 September 2027

Lviv BookForum, Ukraine
2027

Hay Festival Forum Dallas, USA
2027



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