

MEDIA RELEASE

Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G presents a new project by Klaus Littmann:

The Tree - Artwork and Messenger

Basel, 27 April 2021 - Klaus Littmann's project 'For Forest - The Unending Attraction of Nature' in Klagenfurt astounded the international art and culture scene in 2019. What's more, it reflected the heart of the matter of the 21st century. With the same spirit Littmann has embarked on a new project which delves further into this topic. The Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G presents Littmann's two-part follow-up project, which will take place in Basel from 27 April to 11 July 2021. The launch is marked by the temporary walk-in art intervention 'Arena for a Tree' on Basel's Münsterplatz, followed by the exhibition 'Tree Connections' at the KBH.G. The exhibition is dedicated to Littmann's project and the tree as a versatile topic in art history - from the 19th century until today.



'Arena for a Tree' walk-in art intervention by Klaus Littmann, Münsterplatz Basel, 2021, presented by KBH.G, photo Gerhard Maurer

What began around 30 years ago as an artistic intellectual game by Klaus Littmann, and was later implemented in the Wörtherseestadion in Klagenfurt in 2019, will be carried on in Switzerland with a completely new approach. While in Klagenfurt a football stadium was filled with 299 trees, here a single tree will become the main actor of the stage. It is the centre of a public arena, in the heart of Basel in the middle of the busy Münsterplatz. *"Art in public space is the most democratic form of art. Accessible to everyone, it doesn't require the need of a didactic background. This is what Sibylle Geiger wanted for her foundation and the corresponding public art and cultural space,"* explains Raphael Suter, Director of KBH.G. This is the second international exhibition of the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger after it opened in summer 2020.

Walk-in art intervention 'Arena for a Tree' 27 April to 24 May

The optically and physically permeable 'Arena for a Tree' will offer only 50 people at the time the opportunity to admire a unique tree at its centre. *"Nature itself is a total work of art - it deserves an homage once in a while,"* says Klaus Littmann, explaining the intention for his installation around a single tree, which visitors and passers-by can enter every day from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. The arena, in collaboration with Schnetzer Puskas Ingenieure and Häring Holzbau, is made of treated spruce wood, has a diameter of twelve meters and is shaped like a round basket made of loose mesh that protects the tree - eight meters high, that reaches almost the top of the tree. The irregularity of the outer shape and structure of the individual lamellas that form the "mesh" is based on those of a tree. Together with the surrounding grandstand inside, they depict the annual rings of a tree. As for For Forest, the tree will be selected by the Swiss landscape architect Enzo Enea. The selection process does not rely entirely on mere beauty and strength, but rather looks at whether it can be integrated into the Basel tree population and whether its species is capable of long-term adaptation to the conditions changed by global warming. Because this tree is many things: a representative for the forest, an ambassador for nature and its preservation and of

course also a testimonial for the exhibition cycle. *"The arena"*, says Klaus Littmann, *"will leave the Münsterhügel again, the tree should take root in Basel in the long run and will be given to the city as a gift"*.

Tree Connections 11 May to 11 July

Klaus Littmann's exhibition titled 'Tree Connections' at the KBH.G presents around 75 works by 45 artists, many of which have never been on public display, while some have been uniquely commissioned for the show. The exhibition shows the diversity of artistic engagement with nature, presenting amongst others the Swiss artist Alexandre Calame (Diday's student) and the German landscape painter Christian Friedrich Gille, whose paintings document how in the 19th century the tree became the main actor in the picture instead of a staffage. The exhibition gives however a strong emphasis to the art of the 20th century. Here the tree is present in all forms of art and representation. In the form of reliefs by Hans Arp, sculptures by Günther Uecker, Tony Cragg, Jannis Kounellis, Sol Lewitt, Giuseppe Penone, David Nash, project drawings by Christo, objects by Meret Oppenheim and of course in the works of Joseph Beuys, whose pupil Klaus Littmann was at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in the 1970s. All the exhibited works are on loan from private collections, almost exclusively from Swiss private collections and mainly from the region: *"In this way, our art transports are as CO2-neutral as possible and at the same time we can show that art experiences do not always require long journeys or transports,"* explains Klaus Littmann *"The works of the exhibited artists are broad and diverse, it is not always this one iconic work that we should concentrate on. In other words, there is an interesting work by Christo, Meret Oppenheim or Tony Cragg in every country."* The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue (designed by Studio Marie Lusa, publisher Hatje Cantz) with essays by John McDonald, Florian Illies and Isabel Zürcher. As with all projects of the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G, the catalogue and admission are free.

27 April to 24 May **Walk-in art intervention 'Arena for a Tree'** on the Münsterplatz
daily 11am to 8pm

11 May to 11 July **Exhibition 'Tree Connections'** in the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G
daily (except Tuesday) 11am to 6pm or by appointment

Images: <https://www.kbhg.ch/de/1111d/Media-Relations-Arena-fur-einen-Baum>

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About the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G

The Basel H. Geiger Cultural Foundation was founded in 2019 by artist and philanthropist Sibylle Piermattei-Geiger (1930 - 2020), who named the foundation after her grandfather, Swiss pharmacist and entrepreneur Hermann Geiger (1870 - 1962). It was established to provide the City of Basel with an innovative and unique platform for art and artists. The Foundation's aim is to create a place with ample room for creativity and provide a space to present exhibitions, which go beyond the concepts of established institutions. The foundation plans to carry out two to three artistically independent exhibition projects each year; Admission and accompanying catalogue are each free. [kbhg.ch](https://www.kbhg.ch) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

About Klaus Littmann | Littmann Kulturprojekte

Klaus Littmann (born 1951) lives and works as an artist, curator and producer in Basel, Switzerland. Littmann studied art at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, under the guidance of Joseph Beuys. Later he made a name for himself as a maker and independent mediator of contemporary art, as well as initiator and organizer of solo and group exhibitions and finally concentrated on the planning and realization of thematic art exhibitions and interventions in public space. At the centre of his research lies the interest in everyday culture as well as the dialogue between contemporary art and historically grown urban spaces. Underlying each of his complex and unique projects is a dichotic tension highlighting the artist's preoccupation with everyday culture and the confrontation between contemporary art and urban spaces. Klaus Littmann was awarded the Culture Prize of the City of Basel in 2002. The art projects realized by Klaus Littmann at home and abroad are documented in catalogue and book form.

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