

## MEDIA RELEASE

EXPERIMENTAL ECOLOGY: Interdisciplinary Workshops with 5 Scientists | 5 Artists:

# Art As a Bridge between Science and Society

Basel, 24 October 2022 — The project and exhibition **EXPERIMENTAL ECOLOGY: 5 SCIENTISTS | 5 ARTISTS** at the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G, curated by Martina Huber and Gianni Jetzer, brings together ten people from nine countries; they are grouped into five interdisciplinary teams, each of which pairs a scientist and an artist. The aim is to create future-oriented approaches to ecology, that blur the boundary between art and science. Eventually, the results will be presented in an interactive exhibition planned for August 2023. On 28 and 29 October, all five teams will meet for public panels and workshops in Basel, introducing themselves and their projects, giving an insight into the progress of their collaboration. Participants will have a chance to interact with the conceptual and working processes of the different collaborative teams.



Martina Huber, Founder and Curator WE ARE AIA | Gianni Jetzer, Curator and incoming Director Kunstmuseum St. Gallen

Inspired by *Experiments in Art and Technology* (E.A.T.), the New York collective founded in 1967 to facilitate collaborations between art and new technology, Martina Huber and Gianni Jetzer launched **EXPERIMENTAL ECOLOGY: 5 SCIENTISTS | 5 ARTISTS** as an egalitarian, collaborative platform for artists and scientists whose work connects to ecology. In the usual scheme of things, the scientific world rarely has enough to think past the limits of the empirically measurable, and the artistic world rarely has enough status to make art more than a backdrop or illustration for scientific projects. This project, on the other hand, relies on making both partners responsible for the conception, application, and authorship of their work—that was essential for project initiators Huber and Jetzer. Not only will this project set in motion an active, public dialog between the different disciplines, it will also actively transmit the results into the wider community through the exhibition this coming August. This is where the goals and aspirations of the project initiators match those of Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G, which is providing the financial support for the entire project and will host the exhibition in August 2023.

### The Teams and Their Projects

Artist and author **Ingo Niermann** and biologist **Alex Jordan** ask, *“How do fish feel?”* or *“How do you feel like a fish?”* or perhaps *“How do you feel like a fish feels?”*

*“What is the role of plankton in the marine ecosystem and in regulating the earth’s climate?”* Starting with this question, artist **Riikka Tauriainen** and climate scientist and marine ecologist **Meike Vogt** take us on a deep dive into the imaginative world of plankton.

Marine- and fish biologist **Karin Pittman** and artist **Michelle-Marie Letelier** explore the question whether a lack of empathy is hindering a successful fight against climate change. Their workshop will be in the form of a role-playing exercise and will explore the regenerative capacity of slime — something humans sadly lack. This is an invitation to think about *“Ecology, just for once not from an anthropocentric perspective.”*

Artist **Zheng Bo** and biologist **Matthias C. Rilling** discuss the *“Relationship between humans and plants.”* Their collaboration brings together the biology, economics, and politics of plants as well as the accumulation of plastics in soil and water.

Artist and smell RE\_searcher **Sissel Tolaas** and biologist and artist **Christina Agapakis** turn their attention to the functioning of smell in society. Tolaas expresses her fear: *“We live in a completely antiseptic and continuously, comprehensively deodorized world, equivalent to the global homogeneity of faceless glass buildings. Since the smells of our environment can’t always be pleasant, it might mean that we won’t have any at some point!”*

## Panel discussions and workshops on 28 and 29 October

The panels and workshops in the Basler Volkshaus are part of a collaboration with Chus Martinez, Director of the FHNW Academy of Art and Design, Institute Art Gender Nature (IAGN). Together with Martina Huber and Gianni Jetzer, she will greet the participants and provide an introduction to the workshop themes. The panels and workshops can also be live-streamed.

Curator Martina Huber believes that art can stimulate change: *“Worldwide problems such as global warming has transformed ecology in the last ten years from a niche interest into a topic relevant to all parts of society. Now ecology has developed into a wide-ranging field of study with interesting subcategories. In the last decade, the human impact on earth’s biosphere has become an urgent topic, one being dealt with on multiple levels. Yet we often separate artistic and scientific approaches, since there is no space for an exchange of ideas. We want to change that.”*

Taking on current issues and globally relevant topics is one goal of the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G. *“We immediately identified with Martina Huber and Gianni Jetzer’s project concept,”* said Raphael Suter, Director of KBH.G, *“We’ve been in close communication with the curators since the project started in the spring of this year and we’ve been following the directions the team projects are taking. We’ve seen our own perspectives transformed through these interdisciplinary perspectives and engagement and we’re excited to see how the project develops from the workshops into the exhibition in our space in August 2023.”*

28–29 October 2022

## EXPERIMENTAL ECOLOGY: 5 Scientists | 5 Artists

Workshop in collaboration with Chus Martinez, Director at the FHNW Academy of Fine Arts, Basel and Ocean Space TBA21-Academy

[Program](#) | [ABOUT • Experimental Ecology](#)

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## About the Curators

### Martina Huber

Martina Huber is the founder and curator of the platform WE ARE AIA | Awareness in Art, which she created in 2021 in the Löwenbräu in Zürich. She curates exhibitions through transdisciplinary collaboration with artists and experts, in order to sharpen awareness of complex social questions and make issues accessible on an emotional level. Some of her past projects include “The Mouth is for Speaking,” which considered what is needed in order to stand up for one’s rights, “Back to the Roots,” about the objectification and exploitation of nature, and “Can You See Me Now?” about digital surveillance in the form of automated data collection. All these projects offer an approachable form of discourse and reveal fresh possibilities.

[weareaia.ch](http://weareaia.ch) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)

### Gianni Jetzer

Gianni Jetzer is a successful curator specializing in contemporary art. He has more than two decades of experience as director and curator of museum exhibitions in Europe, Asia, and North America. After making a name for himself as the curator of exhibitions in the Migros Museum in Zurich, he became director of the Kunsthalle St. Gallen in 2001. He left his native land in 2006 to become the director of the Swiss Institute in New York. Since 2013 he has worked as an independent curator and since 2014 he has been curator-at-large for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC Starting on 1 November 2022, Jetzer will direct the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, one of Switzerland’s oldest art museums; its extensive collection is housed in three separate locations.

[gianni-jetzer.com](http://gianni-jetzer.com) | [Instagram](#)

## **About the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G**

The Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G was founded in 2019 by the philanthropist Sibylle Geiger (1930–2020), who named it after her grandfather, the Swiss pharmacist and entrepreneur Hermann Geiger (1870–1962). The foundation was established to give the city of Basel and its inhabitants access to a new forum for art and culture. All the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger’s activities pursue the same goal: adding new ideas to the rich cultural offerings of the city of Basel. The foundation plans two or three independent artistic exhibition projects per year; admission and the accompanying catalog are free.

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