

## PRESS RELEASE

Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G presents:

# ARENA FOR A TREE

An art intervention by Klaus Littmann



Arsenale Nord, Venice  
16 April - 31 July 2024

Opening April 2024, *Arena for a Tree* by Klaus Littmann will be presented in Venice for the very first time. Coinciding with the launch of the 60th International Art Exhibition, *Arena for a Tree* is poised to deliver a poignant message on global warming and sustainability.

Nestled against the backdrop of the historic Arsenale Nord, the temporary installation stands as an ark with a sole protagonist at its centre: the tree. From afar, the *Arena for a Tree* looks like a sprouting seed capsule. Up close, it is sculpture, architecture and podium at the same time: the grandstand offers three rows of seating and can accommodate 50 people at the time – creating an intimate experience and ideal view of the living trees whose roots are immersed in a water basin.

Drawing inspiration from the main exhibition of the Biennale, titled "Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere," *Arena for a Tree* explores themes of migration and identity. Over extended geological epochs, the bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), featured in the installation, has been indigenous to

various regions worldwide. While its current habitat primarily spans vast areas of central and south America, the looming spectre of global warming hints at its potential to take root in Europe.

Hardy and tough, this tree adapts to a wide range of soil types, whether wet, salty, dry, or swampy. It is noted for the russet-red fall colour of its lacy needles.

‘The Bald Cypress has an exceptional ability to pump up to 800l of flood water per day, to cool the surrounding atmosphere, to withstand hurricane level winds and storms, and temperature extremes, making it particularly resilient to the challenges of climate change and some of the challenges faced by Venice in particular.’ says landscape architect Enzo Enea, who has been collaborating with Littmann.

*Arena for a Tree* is an everlasting image and evolution of FOR FOREST: The Unending Attraction of Nature, Austria’s largest public art installation, where 299 trees of up to 14 metres high were placed on the football field of the Wörthersee Stadium in Klagenfurt in 2019. This long term touring project by the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger was first presented on Münsterplatz in Basel with its accompanying exhibition *Tree Connections* in 2021, and in spring 2022 in the inner courtyard of the Swiss National Museum in Zurich. Venice is its third and last destination - and the first to include water as another critical global environmental element.

Designed by Littmann and engineered by Schnetzer Puskas Engineers, the arena is formed by a basket-like, 7 metres high translucent structure of wooden ribs and slats. Its curved and haunched laminated beams are bound together at the top by a tension ring and at the bottom by a steel compression belt. Seen in plan view, the design of the structure and the inner grandstand represent the trunk of a tree in cross section with its concentric pattern of growth rings.

What Klaus Littmann cleverly isolates can momentarily rearrange our view of the world. The artist and curator has experience in inviting broad audiences to participate in an all encompassing experience. As a source of shade or as a host for birds and insects, his small temporary nature preserve presents itself as a quiet sensation.

‘When the trees are in leaf, we see a beacon of hope in them. When they drop their leaves, we think about impermanence. The tree is a sign of life, a representative of the diversity of species and a witness to the vulnerability of the global ecosystem.’ says Klaus Littmann.

*Arena for a Tree* has been made possible thanks to the generous support from the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G and the collaboration of ECC Italy (European Cultural Centre) as well as the generous support by the municipality of Venice and the port authorities.

As with all projects of the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G and ECC Italy, the catalogue and admission are free.

## Notes to the Editor

### **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 organiser of solo and group exhibitions and finally concentrated on the planning and realisation 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 realised by Klaus Littmann in Switzerland and abroad are documented in catalogue and book form.

[klauslittmann.com](http://klauslittmann.com) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

### **About ECC**

ECC Italy is a well-established branch of the larger European Cultural Centre with its base in Venice (Italy). Focusing on diverse topics within art, architecture and design, ECC Italy aims to create dynamic exhibition spaces that show the interchanging of ideas from different cultures. More information about ECC Italy and its activities can be found at: [ecc-italy.eu](http://ecc-italy.eu).

### **About Enea Landscape Architecture**

Enea is an international landscape architecture and horticulture company, founded in 1993, with offices in Zurich, New York, Miami and Milan. Led by Enzo Enea, the award-winning firm is known for preserving and designing with mature trees and is committed to creating sustainable landscape design that complements local microclimates and counteracts the effects of climate change. The firm creates landscapes on a range of scales, from private residences to hotels, real estate developments, parks and master plans. Since 2010, Enea's unique [Tree Museum](#) at its headquarters outside Zurich in Rapperswil-Jona has demonstrated Eneas' ethos of combining landscape, architecture, art and design in sustainable ways. The firm's apprenticeship program and tree nursery cultivate the landscape professionals of the future with these values.

[enea.ch](http://enea.ch)

### **About Schnetzer Puskas Engineers**

Schnetzer Puskas Engineers is a civil engineering firm operating in Switzerland and abroad. Employing about 120 people across four sites, we develop ideas and solutions for innovative, future-proof buildings and bridges. Our services cover the entire planning process of load-bearing structures. Interdisciplinary and solution-oriented thinking are central to our work process. In a dialogue based on partnership with clients, architects and specialists, we use our knowledge and experience to find the best options in terms of technology, resources and cost-effectiveness. Reference projects of the office include, amongst others, the SQUARE at HSG St. Gallen with Sou Fujimoto, the timber office building Grosspeter Clime in Basel with Diener&Diener, the Transitlager warehouse conversion in Basel with Bjarke Ingels Group, or the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg with Herzog & de Meuron.

[schnetzerpuskas.com](http://schnetzerpuskas.com) | [instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

### **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.

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**Further Press information:**

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