

PRESS RELEASE

HOME IS A FOREIGN PLACE

SANDRA KNECHT

January 10 – April 27, 2025

Opening: January 9, 2025, 6pm

“The artist Sandra Knecht defies categorization. No number of labels can do her justice. Her project at the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G is proof of this. *Home Is a Foreign Place* is not merely an art exhibition; it’s a ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’, a total work of art that incorporates various media and engages the senses.” — Raphael Suter, Director Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G

Swiss artist Sandra Knecht (*1968 in Zurich, lives and works in Buus/BL) has been exploring the concept of “home” for over a decade. For Knecht, home is a fluid concept, constantly renegotiated, both individual and ephemeral. Her art delves into what home, as an unknown place, means in geographic, historical, sociological, philosophical, and culinary terms.

The exhibition *Home Is a Foreign Place* at the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G addresses the concept of home in various ways – as a feeling, a place, and an idea. It questions how our understanding of home evolves and how deeply it impacts human existence. The works are based on over ten years of intense research and artistic work, in which Knecht has consistently pursued her examination of themes like home, identity, and diversity. *Home Is a Foreign Place* represents the concentrated culmination of Sandra Knecht's practice and is her most extensive solo exhibition to date.

Sandra Knecht’s personal path to art, like her work, is unconventional. In 2011, she began studying visual art after spending over two decades working as a social worker. Her profession often brought her into the kitchens of the families she worked with, where they cooked together, exchanging culinary traditions and building bridges. These experiences continue to nourish her artistic practice. Knecht’s research is always long-term and materializes itself in various formats: installation, archive, photography, poetry, video, sound, performance, sculpture, and culinary art.

Living in Buus, a small village, where Knecht resides with her partner and many animals, is inseparable from her artistic work. “All the plants and animals have at one point been integrated into artworks. They live here with us until they die,” says Knecht. These living beings are essential actors in her art. This coexistence with the animals in the village is her living studio, where art works are conceived and realized. Since 2014, Knecht has documented this practice in her long-term research project *My Land Is Your Land* (2014–ongoing), a series of 20,000 photographs she has published on her Facebook account. A comprehensive and never-before-seen selection of these images will be shown in the exhibition. The photographs serve as both time and mood documents, capturing daily life in Buus and the everyday relationship between humans and animals.

A significant aspect of Sandra Knecht’s oeuvre is the culinary performance, where she creates more than just dishes – she crafts performative artworks as social sculptures. For *Home Is a Foreign Place*, Knecht has composed a total of 32 flavor profiles. These intimate portraits are each dedicated to a female artist who has challenged her in her thinking and in her view of the world, as well as her own position within it. In doing so, these artists’ works, or certain aspects of them, became Sandra’s home.

For example, the flavor profile for Nan Goldin: a sugar cube, infused with 20 drops of homemade and self-concocted bitter schnaps. Other artists include Patti Smith, Virginie Despentes, PJ Harvey, Etel Adnan, and Ana Mendieta. Knecht’s vision behind choosing these artists was that they would all sit together at one table, engaging in conversation as they consumed the dishes. The flavor profiles are presented as recipe

posters in the exhibition's accompanying book. These custom recipes become a "work within the work," reflecting Knecht's artistic essence and embodying the complex relationship between art, identity, memory, and humor.

Home Is a Foreign Place invites us to search for the unknown within ourselves. For Sandra Knecht, food is a boundary-crossing experience: eating means devotion and is a sensory activity. Through food, we connect with others. It's a process of dissolving boundaries between inside and outside, self and other, nature and culture.

Books play a primary role in Sandra Knecht's artistic practice. They act as a living archive, documenting her extensive body of work. The publication accompanying the exhibition *Home Is a Foreign Place* brings together self-portraits, photos, mixtapes, texts, interviews, as well as the flavor profiles and biographies of the artists who have influenced Knecht. This archive will be physically accessible in the exhibition itself: specific works and objects from these artists will be displayed. They make Knecht's search for home tangible and deepen the engagement with themes such as pain, longing, community, responsibility, and sustainability.

Home Is a Foreign Place is a 'Gesamtkunstwerk', a total work of art that presents Knecht's artistic practice in a multifaceted way, encouraging visitors to engage with both the foreign and the familiar within themselves.

About Sandra Knecht

In her artistic practice, Swiss artist Sandra Knecht (*1968 in Zurich, lives and works in Buus, Basel-Landschaft) explores the concept of home, delving into the unfamiliar aspects of the term. She traces her own family history and investigates the notion of home. Knecht's long-term research unfolds through various media such as installation, archive, photography, video, sound, performance, and culinary art. Her multifaceted oeuvre is based on ten years of transdisciplinary research on the concept of home. In her work, the artist develops unique social sculptures, ranging from dinner parties and performance art to the conception and realization of artworks, exhibitions, and book projects.

Sandra Knecht received the Swiss Art Award in 2022 and was nominated for the Swiss Performance Award in 2017. That same year, she was part of the Salon Suisse at the Venice Biennale. Recent exhibitions include *Landscapes of Desire* at the 4th Industrial Art Biennial in Croatia (2023), as well as exhibitions at the Kunsthau Zurich and Kunsthau Baselland. In 2024, she completed a residency at Fundación Casa Wabi in Oaxaca, Mexico, and in 2023, a residency at Atelier Mondial in Berlin. Her work has been published in conjunction with the exhibition *Paul Klee y los secretos de la naturaleza* at the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona. Her monograph *Sandra Knecht; Babel* was published in 2021 by Christoph Merian Verlag, Basel. Her *Cahier d'Artistes* was released by Pro Helvetia (Edizioni Periferia Lucerne/Poschiavo) the same year.

About the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G

The Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G was founded in 2019 by philanthropist Sibylle Geiger (1930–2020), who named the foundation after her grandfather, Swiss pharmacist and entrepreneur Hermann Geiger (1870–1962). The foundation's mission is to provide a unique platform for art and culture to the city of Basel and its residents and visitors. All the foundation's activities aim to add a new dimension to Basel's already rich cultural offerings. The foundation plans to hold two to three independent art exhibitions each year, with free admission and catalogues.

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***Home Is a Foreign Place* – Sandra Knecht**

Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G

Spitalstrasse 18

4056 Basel – Schweiz

January 10 to April 27, 2025
Open daily (except Tuesdays) from 11am to 6pm
Admission and publication are free

Performance Program

February 15: Katja Brunner, Derya Atakan, Jules Petru, Nichtsdestotrotz, Fiji, Féline, Nesa Azadikhah
March 29: Malika Khatir, Talaya Schmid, Ganna Gryniva, Big Zis, Dadaglobal, Nive

A tasting event featuring dishes of the work “The Dinner Party” by Sandra Knecht will take place as part of the exhibition, with details published on Sandra Knecht's website (sandraknecht.ch) and KBH.G's website (kbhg.ch).

Sandra Knecht x Lukas Wassmann

Sandra Knecht, in collaboration with Lukas Wassmann, created a powerful series of portraits featuring 28 people from Sandra's village Buus, outside of Basel—individuals who shape her external sense of home—as well as friends and others she feels connected to through a shared sense of community and like-mindedness. Each protagonist wears a T-shirt or hoodie with the CHNÄCHT logo, co-designed with tattoo artist Ivo Habermacher, and shares a personal statement about what *home* means to them.

The series will be exhibited as part of *Home Is a Foreign Place*, contrasting Sandra's concept of an inner 'home'—her emotional and personal sense of belonging—with her outer reality, rooted in the physical and social fabric of living in the village.

Press Contact

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