

PRESS RELEASE

Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G opens permanent exhibition space in Basel:
New cultural institution opens with show devoted to contemporary Caribbean art

August 27, 2020 (Basel)—The Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G, a new art and cultural center located at Spitalstrasse 18 in Basel, Switzerland, will open with an exhibition dedicated to contemporary Caribbean art. The KBH.G was founded by the recently deceased Sibylle Piermattei-Geiger and her husband Rocco as an expression of Basel’s rich history of patronage and of patrons’ fundamental responsibility of doing their part to ensure free access to the city’s wealth of cultural offerings. The opening exhibition, *one month after being known in that island*, was curated by Yina Jiménez Suriel and Pablo Guardiola and organized by the Basel-based Caribbean Art Initiative (CAI), and features works by artists from across the Caribbean and its cultural diaspora, and each of whom uniquely addresses the region’s turbulent history and cultural heritage. The exhibition will run from August 27 through November 15, 2020, and will be accompanied by a comprehensive public program created in co-operation with the Institute Art, FHNW Academy of Art and Design, the University of Basel, and Radio X. Exhibition entrance and catalogue are free of charge*.

The Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G’s inaugural exhibition is a clear declaration of purpose—of the aim of establishing a new art and cultural space open to all—whether fan, artist, or cultural producer—and to foster dialogue between different interest groups. The foundation seeks to establish a new institution in Basel—already a driving force in the international art and cultural industry—that not only augments the city’s rich local offerings, but also casts an interested gaze upon the wider world. For Basel is not content to simply look inward, rather, its openness to the outside world is part of its DNA. In seeking to articulate these two interests the KBH.G is dedicating its first two exhibitions to a private Basel collection and an internationally acclaimed art duo hailing from the city.

Basel patronage—The democratization of art and culture

The life of founder Sibylle Piermattei-Geiger was circuitous and not necessarily one that might be thought of as typical for a young woman from a well-to-do family. She left home early, immersing herself in a world of art and culture that provided an untold wealth of experiences. Initially, she embarked on a career as an artist and stage designer in Germany. She later spent many years in Italy, where, for instance, she worked at Cinecittà Studios. It was not until 2019 that Sibylle Piermattei-Geiger and her Roman husband Rocco Piermattei returned to Basel with the dream of establishing an art foundation together with seasoned cultural journalist Raphael Suter.

A new and exciting challenge for Raphael Suter, Director of the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger cultural foundation

“I see this as a wonderful opportunity to add an accent to the city’s already impressive cultural wealth through our exhibitions and activities. The relationship that I have shared with Sybille and Rocco Piermattei-Geiger over the past several years has been one that was and continues to be enriching for myself and my entire team. We aspire to bestow that special feeling upon our guests. Naturally, we are inconsolable over the fact that Sybille will not be with us to celebrate the opening of our first exhibition. Still, her presence guides us every step of the way as we go about our tasks, and further inspires us to live up to her wishes and expectations for the foundation into the future.”

The Peace of Basel—Colonization as shared heritage and multi-faceted reality

The inaugural exhibition *one month after being known in that island* connects world and local histories. It begins with the 1795 Peace of Basel treaties—in which the Spanish monarchy ceded dominion over two-thirds of the Caribbean east of Hispaniola, in what is today the Dominican Republic, to France. In addressing their references to colonial history, exhibition curators Yina Jiménez Suriel and Pablo Guardiola are clear: “It’s one thing to perceive reality from the perspective of power, but it is quite another to look at the reality of those who have to live with the consequences of that power.” Works in the exhibition represent the individual ways in which artists interpret and communicate their own histories as well as that of the Caribbean in general. The works must be read individually and as a whole, as they, “Comprise a reference system—based on the ideals of autonomy, emancipation and resistance—that enables glimpses of myriad realities on the ground,” according to Jiménez Suriel and Guardiola.

Caribbean Art Initiative (CAI) founder Albertine Kopp sees the forum afforded by the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger as an opportunity to give more visibility to Caribbean artists: “We are especially pleased with our collaboration and the generous support the KBH.G has given us. This exhibition furthers our mission of using the CAI to create an international platform for Caribbean artists, and for providing a broad public with access to the artistic production of an extremely dynamic region.”

Exhibited artists:

Ramón Miranda Beltrán (b.1982 / Puerto Rico. Lives and works in San Juan); **Minia Biabiany** (b.1988 / Guadeloupe. Lives and works in Pointe-à-Pitre and Mexico City); **Christopher Cozier** (b.1959 / Trinidad and Tobago. Lives and works in Port of Spain); **Tessa Mars** (b.1985 / Haiti. Lives and works in Port-au-Prince); **Elisa Bergel Melo** (b.1989 / Venezuela. Lives and works in Santo Domingo); **José Morbán** (b.1987 / Dominican Republic. Lives and works in Santo Domingo); **Tony Cruz Pabón** (1977 / Puerto Rico. Lives and works in San Juan); **Madeline Jiménez Santil** (b.1986 / Dominican Republic. Lives and works in Mexico City); **Sharelly Emanuelson** (b. 1986/ Curaçao. Lives and works in Willemstad); **Nelson Fory Ferreira** (b. 1986 Colombia. Lives and works in Cartagena); **Guy Régis Jr.** (b.1974 / Haiti. Lives and works in Port-au-Prince).

Accompanying public program (details attached and on the website)

—**Free guided tours** (English, French and German) of the exhibition will be offered twice weekly. Carried out in co-ordination with the University of Basel, these tours will delve into the curatorial framework of the exhibition, as well as the eleven artistic positions featured in it.

—**Family culinary events** with Swiss-Dominican chef Olivier Bur will take place in October and November.

—**Introduction into Haitian Literature**, a conference organized in collaboration with the Alliance française and the Société d'études française de Bâle, will take place on September 16, 2020, at 6:15 p.m. The French-speaking Haitian writer and poet Makenzy Orcel will present an overview of the art and literature of his home country, as well as reading excerpts from his own writings.

—**Film program at the Stadtkino Basel**, a three-part series screening four films from Gilles Elie-Dit-Cosaque, Beatriz Santiago Muñoz, José Maria Cabral and Sandra Vivas—all of which are thematically connected to the exhibition.

— In collaboration with the **Art Institute HGK FHNW** in Basel, four podcast episodes will be recorded as part of the series *Promise No Promises!*.

—**Acoustic journeys across the Caribbean** will be created by DJs performing live sets in the exhibition space and broadcast on Radio X.

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The Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G offers free admission to all exhibitions, and provides elaborately designed accompanying catalogs for each free of charge. Please note the foundation is bound to maintain rules pertaining to the coronavirus pandemic. The Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger observes local, state, and federal laws regulating visitor admissions. These currently allow a maximum of one visitor per four square meters of floor space. For the health and safety of all, we kindly ask visitors to wear protective face masks in the foundation, and will happily provide free masks to anyone who may need or want one.

Further information:

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Publication quality photographic images from the foundation and the exhibition as well as detailed artists' biographies can be found [here](#).

About the curators

Yina Jiménez Suriel

Dominican curator, researcher, and architect Yina Jiménez Suriel earned a master's degree in art history and visual culture from the visual studies program at the University of València, Spain. She participated in the first installment of the Curando Caribe Program at the Centro Cultural de España in Santo Domingo and the Centro León. She is currently researching women and architectural space in the Dominican Republic under the title "Domestic Revolution, Public History," in co-operation with the Polytechnic University of València and the magazine *Arquitexto*. The project is based on the thesis that contemporary art represents the first intellectual framework from which to observe an organic Dominican concept of space. She has also worked as a curator at Centro León since 2018, where she concentrates on strengthening the institute's research program, as well as developing new strategies for understanding Dominican social history through the research of its visual production.

Pablo Guardiola

Working primarily with objects, photographs, and text, Pablo Guardiola's artistic work focusses on the production of various forms of reading and storytelling, as well as how works are perceived and interpreted. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Puerto Rico (Río Piedras) and an MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. His work has been exhibited, among others, at: Little Tree Gallery, Raza Gallery, Romer Young Gallery, the San Francisco Arts Commission, and Embajada. In 2009, Guardiola received a commission from the San Francisco Arts Commission's Cultural Equity Office. In 2012, he was a resident artist at Southern Exposure (Alternative Exposure Grant) and the Creative Capacity Fund (CCF), both in San Francisco, California. In 2019, he was awarded a stipend from the Flamboyán Arts Fund in co-operation with the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALC) and the Flamboyán Arts Fund in Puerto Rico. Guardiola has been co-director of Beta Local in San Juan, Puerto Rico, since 2013.

About the Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G

The Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger | KBH.G was founded in 2019 by philanthropist Sibylle Piermattei-Geiger (1930–2020), who named it after her grandfather, the Swiss pharmaceuticals businessman Hermann Geiger (1870–1962). The KBH.G was founded with the aim of providing Basel and its inhabitants with a unique new forum for art and artistic production. The KBH.G plans to stage two to three exhibitions in its Basel space each year. Admission and exhibition catalogs are free of charge. Each exhibition will be executed with absolute artistic freedom and not be subject to any overarching concept. The common thread connecting each exhibition at KBH.G will be the wealth of new cultural impulses they add to Basel's already rich cultural offerings.

About the Caribbean Art Initiative (CAI)

The Caribbean Art Initiative (CAI) was founded in 2019 as an independent, non-profit program committed to creating a network to foster the development of art and cultural production throughout the entire Caribbean region. The CAI seeks to draw attention to the artistic production of the region and increase its presence internationally. Under the direction of Albertine Kopp, and with the collaboration of international advisors Andrés Szántó and Pablo León de la Barra, the CAI focus on the perception and concept of art and culture across the region. The CAI supports artists from the region and now living and working in its cultural diaspora. The initiative seeks to engage Caribbean artists, curators, writers, and teachers in international dialogue between cultural producers and institutions around the world.