

Media Release

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## **Elena Filipovic Takes the Helm at the Kunstmuseum Basel The New Director Introduces Herself**

The Kunstmuseum Basel has a new director: Elena Filipovic moved into her position in April 2024. She succeeds Josef Helfenstein, who retired at the end of 2023.

Of her new mandate, Filipovic says, “It is an honor to take on this impressive responsibility and I am deeply committed to protecting and further expanding the legacy of one of the world’s important art museums.” The Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, the city’s public art collection, constitutes the Kunstmuseum’s historic core; its formation goes back to 1661 in an effort to preserve works of art and artists’ creativity and ideas for future generations and to share them with audiences from both near and far. This tradition of a truly public museum in which the encounter with art has served as a source of vital inspiration and a challenge to common perceptions of the world is something Filipovic wishes to build upon. To that end, she aims to enlarge the audience by strengthening Kunstmuseum Basel to become a place that is even more accessible, inclusive, and welcoming.

“The Kunstmuseum Basel is already exceptional but I believe it also has the potential to become even more so through a heightened commitment to seeing itself in the now: a museum in which we understand that we have hundreds of years of art that can resonate with and tell us something important about our life in the present. A museum in which we can look at Holbein’s *Dead Christ in the Tomb*, for instance, and come to understand how we as a society have always grappled with mortality, loss, and faith, such that a painting more than 500 years old can still speak to us today.” That is how Filipovic sketches her approach: the museum with its art treasures spanning seven centuries, she believes, must develop new modes of thinking and action in its programming and research to help us grapple with the complexities of today.

One focus of her work will accordingly be on the collection. Filipovic will not only gradually add new accents in the presentations of art from the collection in all three of the museum’s venues. She hopes also to expand the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel with carefully reflected acquisitions and gifts, for example of works by underrepresented

artists from a range of backgrounds. She moreover believes that central issues in contemporary society such as sustainability and diversity are key challenges the Kunstmuseum Basel needs to address.

Visitors can already see the first of what will be gradual changes initiated by Filipovic in the collection presentation. Furthermore she will co-curate a retrospective exhibition in spring and summer 2025, which will take a new look at the work of the French-Italian sculptor and photographer Medardo Rosso (1858-1928) from a contemporary perspective. The presentation of this oeuvre, which helped pave the way for modernism, is produced in cooperation with the Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig / mumok, Vienna, and will be rounded out by works by other artists.

### **Biographical details**

Elena Filipovic (born 1972) joins the Kunstmuseum after more than nine years as director and curator of Kunsthalle Basel, where she has organized over seventy exhibitions, and following her tenure as senior curator of WIELS, Brussels from 2008 to 2014. She was curator of the Croatian Pavilion of the Venice Biennale of Art in 2022 and was co-curator, with Adam Szymczyk, of *When things cast no shadow*, the 5th Berlin Biennale of Contemporary Art in 2008. She has a Ph.D in Art History from Princeton University and has placed writing and research at the center of her approach to art. Her writings have appeared in numerous artists' catalogues and journals and she has edited several compendiums, including *The Artist as Curator: An Anthology* (Mousse Publications, 2017) and *The Biennial Reader: Anthology on Large-Scale Perennial Exhibitions of Contemporary Art*, with Marieke van Hal and Solveig Øvstebø (Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010). She is author of *David Hammons, Bliz-aard Ball Sale* (Afterall Books, 2017), for which she was awarded an Andy Warhol Foundation/Creative Capital Arts Writers Grant, and *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp* (MIT Press, 2016), winner of Honorable Mention, 2017 PROSE Awards in Art History and Criticism.

### **Imagery and media release**

[www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/media](http://www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/media)

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