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Elena Filipovic to become director of Kunstmuseum Basel

The internationally acclaimed curator and director of Kunsthalle Basel will take over the reins at the renowned Kunstmuseum Basel from June 2024.

Elena Filipovic has been selected as new director of Kunstmuseum Basel. Beat Jans, President of the Government of the Canton of Basel-Stadt, approved the unanimous recommendation made by the museum's committees. 51-year-old US-born Ms Filipovic has an international track record and has successfully headed Kunsthalle Basel for nearly nine years.

Elena Filipovic (*1972), currently director and head curator of Kunsthalle Basel, will take over as director of Kunstmuseum Basel – one of the world's most significant art museums due to its outstanding collection. The appointment was sealed by Beat Jans, president of the cantonal government of Basel-Stadt, on the unanimous recommendation of the museum's art committee, which in turn was based on the equally unanimous recommendation of the selection committee.

The selection committee was jointly led by Felix Uhlmann, chairman of Kunstmuseum Basel's art committee and professor of constitutional and administrative law at the University of Zurich, and Katrin Grögel, head of the cantonal culture department, and consisted of further members of the art committee. International experts were also consulted during the selection procedure, in the course of which 35 applications were assessed. On behalf of the art committee, Felix Uhlmann gave the following reasons for the final recommendation: "Elena Filipovic convinced the committee with her vision regarding the future of our museum as well as her professional track record, her leadership skills and her infectious enthusiasm for the entire range of art history, which enables her to make the arts attractive to people from all walks of life."

International impact as curator and director

Elena Filipovic will assume her position at Kunstmuseum Basel with its three venues Hauptbau (main building), Neubau (extension) and Gegenwart (museum of contemporary art) at the latest on 1 June 2024. The interim period between the retirement of the Josef Helfenstein, the current director who has led the museum with great success since 2016, and the accession of Ms Filipovic will be bridged by deputy director Anita Haldemann together with the management. Elena Filipovic is to be involved in any important decisions.

Until then, she will remain director of Kunsthalle Basel, where she has realised over 60 internationally acclaimed exhibitions since 2014, including landmark solo exhibitions by the likes of Michael Armitage, Dora Budor, Matthew Angelo Harrison, Yngve Holen, Anne Imhof, Deana Lawson, Wong Ping, Andra Ursuța, Raphaela Vogel, Anicka Yi and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, as well as cross-generational group exhibitions including *Ungestalt* in 2017, *New Swiss Performance Now* in 2018 and *INFORMATION (Today)* in 2021.

Before working at Kunsthalle Basel, Elena Filipovic was senior curator at Wiels Centrum voor Hedendaagse Kunst in Brussels. In 2008, together with Adam Szymczyk, she curated the 5th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art. From 2009 to 2011, she was responsible for the Satellite programme of the Parisian arts centre Jeu de Paume. In 2022, she curated the Croatian pavilion at the 59th Venice Art Biennale. Ms Filipovic has also taught at several renowned universities and

art academies and is a highly regarded author and editor of journals, catalogues and academic publications. She concluded her formal education with a PhD at Princeton University, for which she wrote a thesis on Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968).

Institution with global appeal

Kunstmuseum Basel is one of the city's and region's stand-out institutions. "I am convinced that Elena Filipovic will succeed both in expanding the museum's global position as an internationally leading art museum and in strengthening its regional roots," said Felix Uhlmann when explaining the selection committee's decision to recommend her for the position. President of the Government of the Canton of Basel-Stadt Beat Jans added: "With Elena Filipovic, Kunstmuseum Basel will have at its helm an outstanding personality with a far-reaching international network."

The greatest operational challenge – and equally a unique opportunity – in the coming years will be the refurbishment of the museum's heritage-listed main building. Further demanding tasks awaiting the new director include top-range exhibition programming, further development of the collection policy and cultivating ties at local, national and international levels.

"Rich history and unrivalled collection"

Elena Filipovic was thrilled by her appointment as upcoming head of the renowned art museum. "The art historian in me couldn't be more thrilled and also more deeply honored by the opportunity to lead one of the world's great art museums in a city that is so strongly committed to the arts, and thereby continue the remarkable work carried out by Josef Helfenstein. I very much look forward to this new task of shaping the museum's future so that its rich history and unrivalled collection remain alive in the public awareness with new content and narratives. As someone who believes fundamentally in the vital civic role of museums, it is exhilarating to reflect on the Kunstmuseum Basel and its possibilities, and importantly also on how it can respond to a world that is becoming ever more complex."

First-ever woman as a director of Kunsthalle Basel

Martin Hatebur, president of the Basler Kunstverein (art society), the sponsoring organisation of Kunsthalle Basel, commented the appointment as follows: "In November 2014, the board of the Basler Kunstverein, together with an international selection committee, chose Elena Filipovic as director of Kunsthalle Basel. As the first-ever woman in this position, she has successfully steered this more than 150-year-old institution and enriched it with her future-oriented international program in collaboration with the board, the team and artists. The Basler Kunstverein is proud of her new appointment and is pleased that, in her position as director of the city's art museum, she will remain active in Basel.

Further information

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Images

High-definition visual material: www.medien.bs.ch/medienmitteilungen