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For Immediate Release

Artist and composer Ari Benjamin Meyers to present the U.S. debut of Kunsthalle for Music at Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB)

Exhibition: Kunsthalle for Music

Opening Reception: Saturday, September 21, 2019, 6 - 8 pm at MCASB

Exhibition on View: September 21 – November 3, 2019



Left: Exhibition View, Kunsthalle for Music, Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, 2019. Courtesy MCASB. Photo: Alex Blair. **Right:** Exhibition View, Kunsthalle for Music, Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, 2019. Courtesy MCASB. Photo: Alex Blair

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA. Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB) is pleased to announce the United States institutional debut of Berlin-based artist and composer, Ari Benjamin Meyers. Being exhibited for the first time in the United States, Kunsthalle for Music is dedicated to presenting music within the histories and environments of the visual arts. Co-founded with the Witte de With Center of Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, and Spring Workshop, Hong Kong, Kunsthalle for Music is comprised of a specially selected, local ensemble performing an on-site exhibition of musical works drawn from a “collection” that includes existing and newly commissioned solos, duets, and group pieces composed by Meyers and other artists.

The presentation of Kunsthalle for Music at MCASB is curated by Abaseh Mirvali, MCASB Executive Director and Chief Curator. “Curating this exhibition has been incredibly rewarding,” said Mirvali. “For a museum of our size and resources, building a strong team of collaborators became essential, which allowed me to gain a better understanding of Santa Barbara’s music community, as well as that of the Greater California area. By bringing to our city this different perspective on how to listen to music and experience a musical performance, I truly believe that Kunsthalle for Music





will highlight the Museum’s ability to deliver to the community a world-class exhibition through hard work and local collaboration.”

In calling his institution a “Kunsthalle,” Meyers aligns its mission and goals with the Germanic Kunsthalle tradition: public, independent, and impermanent premises known for displaying art exhibitions. Historically, the *Kunsthalle* (literally “art hall”) emerged as a parallel institution to traditional, established art museums, and as an institutional critique. They often functioned as a non-profit organization, run by an art association, who worked in the creation of art exhibitions through collaborations with local artists and thinkers.

According to Mirvali, a central aspect of this exhibition is the ensemble composed of seven performing artists who have been selected from the community. “They are seven people from diverse backgrounds who, through sharing their art in this exhibition setting, ultimately become pieces of art themselves. As the ensemble performs the repertoire throughout the day,” Mirvali explained, “the musicians move around the museum space, inhabiting it and coming into contact with one another and with the audience.”

When asked about the origins of the exhibition, Mirvali stated, “I first became interested in Ari’s practice through the collaborations he made with artists such as Saâdane Afif and Anri Sala. It was through those introductions that I met Ari in Berlin and began following his work. A few years later, after presenting Ari to Defne Ayas (then the Director at Witte de With in Rotterdam), the conversation surrounding the creation of Kunsthalle for Music began, which led to its presentation at Witte de With in 2018.”

Orchestrated by Meyers, the exhibition’s score is open to variations, which are determined by audience participation, by ensemble members, and by interaction in between audience and ensemble. This approach will translate into unique interpretations—an unrepeatably experience—every day. As such, visitors are encouraged to attend the exhibition more than once. Whenever the ensemble is not actively performing, Kunsthalle for Music will still activate the museum space for visitors in various ways, including ensemble members using the space to rehearse or leaving recorded musical traces in their absence.

“The relationship between musicians and listeners will be constantly transforming,” Mirvali concluded. “As a result, the compositions will be approached differently each time, activating both the performers and the audience in an evolving musical exhibition.”

Kunsthalle for Music at MCASB is curated by Abaseh Mirvali, Executive Director and Chief Curator, with curatorial support by Constanza Medina, Curatorial Research Associate. Exhibition text by Constanza Medina and Abaseh Mirvali. Kunsthalle for Music was originally commissioned by Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, and developed in partnership with Spring Workshop, Hong Kong. Ari Benjamin Meyers is its Founder and Artistic Director.

Work descriptions by Witte de With, Rotterdam, except where otherwise indicated. Editorial support by Alesha Claveria, UCSB Interdisciplinary Humanities Center Fellowship Curatorial Intern.

Museum Opening Hours

Free admission to Kunsthalle for Music courtesy of Suzanne Klein and Jacquelyn Klein-Brown.

Sunday:	12 – 5 PM	Thursday:	2 – 7 PM
Monday:	Closed	Friday:	2 – 7 PM
Tuesday:	Closed	Saturday:	12 – 5 PM
Wednesday:	1 – 6 PM		





About the Artist

Ari Benjamin Meyers (b.1972, New York, USA) lives and works in Berlin, Germany. Meyers received his training as a pianist, composer, and conductor at The Juilliard School, Yale University, and Peabody Institute. Trading the concert format for that of the exhibition, his works as an artist—such as *Kunsthalle for Music* (2018), *Symphony 80* (with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra) and *Solo for Ayumi* (both 2017)—explore structures and processes that redefine the performative, social, and ephemeral nature of music as well as the relationship between performer and audience. His diverse practice features musical performances for the stage and exhibition spaces as well as three operas including a commission for the Semperoper Dresden and a ballet for the Paris Opera. He has collaborated with artists including Tino Sehgal, Anri Sala, and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and bands such as The Residents, Einstürzende Neubauten, and Chicks on Speed.

Recent solo shows include *Tacet* at Kunstverein Kassel, Germany (2019) and *In Concert* at OGR Turin, Italy (2019). His works have been shown at Frac Franche-Comté, Besançon, France (2019); Pinault Collection, Punta della Dogana, Venice, Italy (2019); Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool, United Kingdom (2018); Nowy Teatr, Warsaw, Poland (2018); Public Art Munich, Munich, Germany (2018); Witte de With, Rotterdam, Netherlands (2018); Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, France (2017); Spring Workshop, Hong Kong, China (2017); Lenbachhaus, Munich, Germany (2017); and Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, Germany (2016).

About the Curator

Abaseh Mirvali is the Executive Director, Chief Curator, and CEO at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, in Santa Barbara, California, USA. During her inaugural year as Chief Curator, Mirvali has presented the first solo U.S. West Coast show of Turin-based artist, Lara Favaretto, and the U.S. West Coast solo museum debut show of American filmmaker and artist, James Benning, *James Benning: Quilts, Cigarettes & Dirt (Portraits of America)*. Upcoming exhibitions curated by Mirvali are the U.S. institutional debut of Ari Benjamin Meyers and his institution Kunsthalle for Music, and the solo exhibition of New York-based artist N. Dash.

Mirvali is the author of the concept and program development of the 2013 edition of The Biennial of the Americas, where she served as CEO, Executive Director, and Comisaria from 2011 to 2013. She was the Chief Curator of *Draft Urbanism*, an innovative and groundbreaking exhibition of urban architectural interventions. Between 2005 and 2009, Mirvali was the Executive Director of the Colección/Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo, where she consolidated and developed one of the most distinguished collections of contemporary art for a private institution in Latin America.

About the Ensemble

Mika Hayashi Ebbesen is a queer Japanese-Norwegian artist and writer, interested in composing with audible frequencies to build spatial narratives for evanescent inhabitation. They are currently based in Berlin and occasionally play cello.

Booker Stardrum is a Los Angeles based percussionist and composer. His recent compositions are sculptural, involving the dense layering of instruments, a focus on pan-tonality and an intuitive approach to rhythm.

Diego Gaeta is a performer and composer working and living in Southern California. Gaeta plays in jazz, hip-hop, and chamber music bands regularly as a keyboardist, often in explorative improvisational settings. He performs as a solo artist under his full name. He also composes scores, creates sound design, and edits sound for film and visual media.

Garrett Wingfield is a Los Angeles based saxophonist and composer who actively avoids boundaries and borders in his art-making. His practice undermines the idea that improvisation and highly structured composition are antithetical. Instead, his music brings an intuitive and human element to the otherwise dense and esoteric.

Marta Tiesenga is a polymath and performer based in Los Angeles, California. In their work, they are primarily interested in the space between procedure and spontaneity.



Nigel Deane is a performer and artist based in the periphery of Los Angeles. He specializes in musical performance on the violin, with a particular interest in notes and sounds that are often ignored in musical education. He has also created and performed works of film, dance, theater, and experimental religious ceremony.

Pauline Lay is an instrumentalist, composer, and organizer based in Los Angeles. In addition to her solo improvised violin and electronics presentations, she currently performs and collaborates with other musicians in varying iterations and genres from duets to larger ensembles, including her sound enveloping piece, *5x5, a composition for 25 synthesizers*.

Acknowledgements

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About the Museum

Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB) is a non-profit, non-collecting museum dedicated to the exhibition, education, and cultivation of the art of our time. Formerly Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum (CAF), MCASB is the premier venue for contemporary art between Los Angeles and San Francisco. MCASB is located at the Paseo Nuevo Upper Arts Terrace in downtown Santa Barbara, California. As the only contemporary art museum between Los Angeles and the Bay Area, MCASB believes that creative expression is a vital part of everyday life and an essential way to interact with the world, enabling a greater degree of empathy, insight, and imagination.

