

# Dora Budor

# EN

## I am Gong

## Kunsthalle Basel

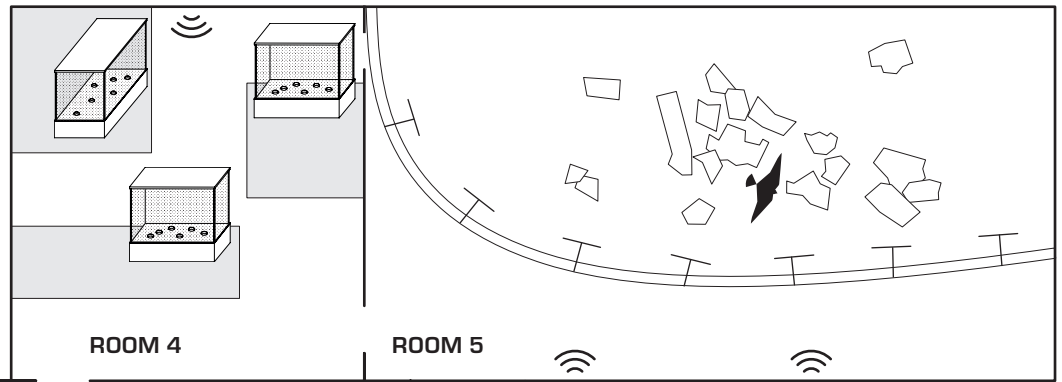
Can an exhibition—typically an assembly of discrete, immutable things on public display—function like a reactive organism? Can it, in that sense, be *alive*? And can it, in order to be so, be fed by a confluence of historical and real-time events that propel it through an ever-changing choreography of transformation? These are the preoccupations underlying *I am Gong*, Dora Budor’s experimental exhibition and first institutional solo show in Europe.

Taking cues from cinema, science fiction, and architectural history in equal measure, the Croatian-born, New York-based artist often constructs her artworks as interdependent systems. Budor’s new exhibition, however, links these systems to Kunsthalle Basel’s specific historic and cultural context, from its origins to the present, in a quest to relinquish control over nearly every artwork in the show by submitting it to unpredictable external forces.

Basel’s Musiksaal, a legendary concert hall located across the street, is the show’s literal motor—or lifeblood, if you will. Designed by Johann Jakob Stehlin-Burckhardt and completed in 1876 (four years after its neighbor, Kunsthalle Basel, which he also designed), the concert hall was intended as a “sibling,” an acoustic counterpart, to a Kunsthalle dedicated to the visual arts. The Musiksaal’s current, almost archaeological reconstruction governs the formal, atmospheric, and sonic conditions of Budor’s exhibition. Sound-sensitive devices

24.5.–  
11.8.2019

*Origin I (A Stag Drinking)*, 2019  
*Origin II (Burning of the Houses)*, 2019  
*Origin III (Snow Storm)*, 2019  
 3 custom environmental chambers  
 (reactive electronic system, compressor,  
 valves, 3D printed elements, aluminum,  
 acrylic, LED light, glass, wood, paint),  
 organic and synthetic pigments,  
 diatomaceous earth, FX dust, felt  
 Dimensions variable; chambers,  
 each 152 × 160 × 86 cm

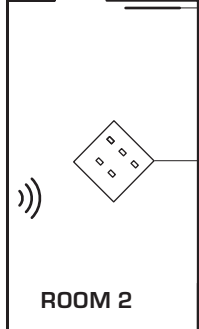


*The Sound-Sweep*, 2019  
 Modulating 14 channel  
 sound installation, situated  
 in building cavities  
 Reactive electronic system,  
 transducers, speakers, subwoofers  
 Open duration



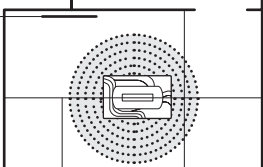
*The Preserving Machine*, 2018–19  
 Installation with biomimetic robot bird, tinted  
 vinyl enclosure, custom audio-to-motion  
 computer navigation system, detritus, parts of  
 building remains from the construction site of the  
 Musiksaal (elements from 1886, 1905, and 1930),  
 architectural mock-up façade from the Musiksaal  
 Dimensions variable, enclosure height 310 cm,  
 robot 34 × 14 × 8 cm

*Solo for 1939*, 2019  
 Brass, scenic aging  
 244 × 122 × 2.5 cm

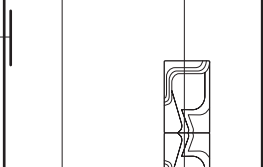


*The Devil, Probably*, 2019  
 Architectural mock-up  
 of the planned flooring  
 of the Musiksaal  
 Wood, stain, gelatin, lysergic  
 acid diethylamide  
 190 × 199 × 4.5 cm

*Solo for 1872*, 2019  
 Brass, scenic aging  
 244 × 122 × 2.5 cm

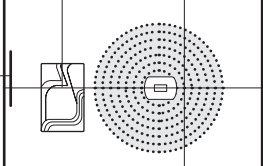
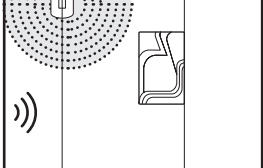
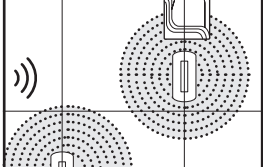


*Solo for 1973*, 2019  
 Brass, scenic aging  
 244 × 122 × 2.5 cm



*The Year without a Summer  
 (Klug's Field)*, 2019  
 Environment with 5 Terrazza  
 DS-1025 seating elements  
 (designed by Ubald Klug in 1973,  
 produced by De Sede, Switzerland),  
 4 ash dispersing machines with  
 reactive electronic system, special  
 effect ash, light scenario  
 Dimensions variable;  
 2 machines, each 123.4 × 53.3 × 27.4 cm;  
 2 machines, each 76.4 × 53.3 × 27.4 cm;  
 5 seating elements, 66 × 146 × 85 cm,  
 67 × 150 × 85 cm, 67 × 150 × 85 cm,  
 66 × 150 × 85 cm, 69 × 156 × 86 cm  
 Lenders of the seating elements: De Sede,  
 Switzerland; Morentz, The Netherlands;  
 private collection

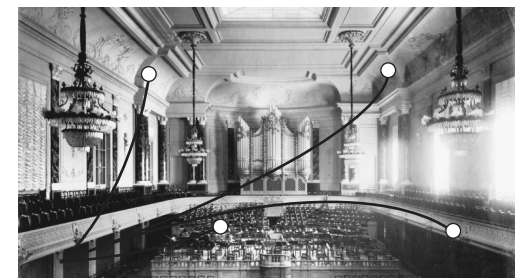
*Solo for 1876*, 2019  
 Brass, scenic aging  
 244 × 122 × 2.5 cm



**OFFSITE  
 MUSIKSAAL**

(concert hall located in the Stadtcasino Basel,  
 currently not publicly accessible)

*Tuning (Well, It's a Vertebrate...)*, 2019  
 Live frequency transmission from the Musiksaal  
 Software, electronics, microphones  
 Duration of the exhibition



Musiksaal, 1905, Stadtcasino Basel, Fotoarchiv Kantonale  
 Denkmalpflege Basel-Stadt

The following individuals were involved in relation to the featured works:  
 Tommy Martinez (systems design), Benjamin Cohen (robotics and engineering),  
 Angie Meitzler (web programming), Frank Mussara (software),  
 Celia Hollander (composer), Johan Lescure (sound design), and Christine Bechameil (scenic)

All works courtesy of the artist

placed inside the construction site collect signals—shrill noises of construction drills, metal beams being welded, wind whipping past the windows—and transmit their frequencies in real time to Kunsthalle Basel, if, when, and with whatever intensity they occur. This sensory transaction system carries its own title, *Tuning (Well, It's a Vertebrate...)*, and metastasizes in Budor's artworks in various ways.

The exhibition opens with the installation *The Year without a Summer (Klug's Field)*, a seemingly desolate environment enveloped in a slightly greenish light. Worn leather sofas, some battered and torn, occupy the space, their modular, 1970s utopian designs serving as the landscape's ground. Overhead, four machines each sporadically release flutters of cinematic special-effect ash according to furtive rules. Piles of faux cinders accumulate on the floor and sofas as if in the aftermath of some unidentified cataclysm. In fact, the speed and quantity of the ash falls, and thus the sizes and shapes of the piles, each visibly manifest the noise level transmitted from a different area of the Musiksaal. The ensuing image-forms evolve over the duration of the exhibition.

Three large brass plates also occupy the space. Specially treated to display the patina and marks of age that would allow their being assigned to different historical moments, each is a representation of time's passage. A fourth such plate, in the second room, joins an architectural mock-up of the planned parquet flooring for the Musiksaal. The herringbone pattern of the wood pieces, mirroring Kunsthalle Basel's own parquet floor, has holes filled with a gelatinous substance. Future floor laid upon historic floor, projection laid upon actuality, material rigidity interrupted by viscous goo—incongruities cling to *The Devil, Probably*, which takes its title from Robert Bresson's 1977 film about a post-1968 society in crisis.

Neither entirely in the present nor confined to the past, neither nostalgic nor futurist, the exhibition produces a sense of temporal unease. So, too, is a kind of estrangement made palpable through a specially created soundscape that travels through the cavities of the building. It trembles and resonates from the walls and floors, concentrating in the exhibition's third room. The composition is, again, modulated by activity at the nearby construction site. A darkly affecting, ever-mutating sound results, whose impetus was J. G. Ballard's 1960 short story "The Sound-Sweep," which likewise lends Budor's piece its title. Ballard's narrative describes a world where technological developments have rendered audible music obsolete, but sounds have been deposited in solid surfaces, causing emotional flashbacks

among inhabitants when these sonic sediments trickle out. History, both Ballard and Budor insist, is never entirely past, but instead lodged in the very fabric of our surroundings and seeping into the present.

The fourth room features a trilogy of sculptures, like hybrids between natural history vitrines, laboratory incubators, and industrial test chambers. Each intermittently spurts dust and pigments whose movement and hues evoke the atmospheres of J. M. W. Turner's historical paintings (nearly contemporaneous with the construction of Kunsthalle Basel and the Musiksaal), which are said to portray visible changes in the Earth's atmosphere due to industrial pollution and volcanic dust. Frequencies from the Musiksaal here too act as a live score generating the unstable image-forms inside each chamber, activating airflows and particulates to craft a psychogeography of dirt and waste expressive of the era spanning the Industrial Revolution to the present day.

In the final room, a lone robot bird endlessly flies above a pile of wreckage, visible through the yellow-orange cast of its enclosure. Its flight pattern is directed by a translation of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 (the first music piece ever performed by an orchestra in the Musiksaal, on October 4, 1876) into a movement vector. Below, historic architectural elements from the Musiksaal's construction site are joined by contemporary mock-ups of the building's facade, fashioning a ruinous landscape. Titled *The Preserving Machine*, Budor's installation borrows its name from Philip K. Dick's 1953 science-fiction short story, which describes an attempt to conserve classical music in the face of cultural collapse by encoding musical scores into animals. But beastly evolution mutates the scores to the point of unrecognizability: nature and culture compete in a fight for the survival of the fittest. The artist, for her part, erects her own mechanism for viewing and preservation, inscribing music in biomimetic movement patterns and allowing us to find future monuments amid rubble.

Although references to dark visions portending the perils of technology and of the future of culture and society infuse *I am Gong*, Budor's approach is not patently or unequivocally apocalyptic. She stitches together history and the now, the visual and the auditory, one building and another, order and disorder, to create environments that make uncertainty visceral. To accomplish this, Budor has constructed what amounts to a variable-driven exhibition-system that effectively deregulates the fixity of the artwork and its presentation

context. Rerouting the most basic functions of the solo show that normally make it a site of artistic agency and display, she transforms it into an assembly of constantly evolving contingencies. The result exudes a kind of disobedience. Such productive unruliness may be entirely apt, the artist seems to say, for a moment like our own.

Dora Budor was born in 1984 in Zagreb; she lives and works in New York, US.

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LUMA  
FOUNDATION

outset.



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#### GUIDED TOURS THROUGH THE EXHIBITION

Every Sunday at 3 pm guided tour, in German

26.5.2019, Sunday, 3 pm and

16.6.2019, Sunday, 3 pm

Curator's tour with Elena Filipovic, in English

27.6.2019, Thursday, 6:30 pm

Guided tour, in English

#### EDUCATION / PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Presentation of the art education project *We are Pling Plong*

5.6.2019, Wednesday, 6:30 pm

A musical-performative staging in Dora Budor's exhibition by pupils of the primary school Brunnmatt. Developed in collaboration with the musicians Ludovica Bizzarri, Chi Him Chik, and Lara Süß.

Kunsthalle Basel Night

12.6.2019, Wednesday, 7–10 pm

Exhibitions with extended opening hours and Geumhyung Jeong performing a technical test of her robotic sculptures from 7–9 pm. Free entry.

*Kunsthalle ohne Schwellen*

8.7.–2.8.2019, workshops for people with disabilities

In the all-day workshops, participants explore the current exhibitions and try out different forms of artistic expression. By reservation only: [kunstvermittlung@kunsthallebasel.ch](mailto:kunstvermittlung@kunsthallebasel.ch)

#### EXTERNAL EVENT

*Artists' Influences*

14.6.2019, Friday, 1 pm

Panel discussion with Dora Budor, Beatriz Colomina, and Jacques Herzog, moderated by Hans Ulrich Obrist at Art Basel, Messe Basel, Hall 1. Free entry.

In the Kunsthalle Basel library you will find a selection of publications related to Dora Budor.

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram and share your photos and impressions with #kunsthallebasel.

More information at [kunsthallebasel.ch](http://kunsthallebasel.ch)