

In her exhibition, *Of my life*, artist Ser Serpas (b. 1995) unfolds a landscape of painting, performance, and poetry across five rooms and the foyer at Kunsthalle Basel. Her most extensive institutional solo exhibition in Switzerland to date forms a fragile dramaturgy of imprint, repetition, and disappearance, where images surface and dissolve, wavering on the edge of vanishing.

This sense of evanescence is embedded in the painting process itself; Serpas transfers images by placing two canvases on top of each other while the paint is still wet. This creates an imprint that captures the moment of contact between the two materials. The result is a series of double images that resemble prints, traces, memories, or remnants. Each pressed surface captures not only what was but also what is lost or transformed. Through this serial gesture, distortions, shadows, and shifts emerge, as the process of repetition introduces differences and alterations to the image.

Two rooms, the first and the last of the exhibition, present Serpas' paintings. In these spaces, the unframed works are affixed directly to wooden panels, their surfaces bearing the imprint of transfer and time. Arriving at the final room, the echo of the first returns with uncanny familiarity. The near-symmetry unsettles, like stepping into a dream that loops back on itself: *Have I been in this room already?*

The exhibition is a space of expression—at times frozen in paint, at others repeated through the body. Embedded within, performances unfold. In three rooms and the entrance hall, Serpas reimagines during Art Basel week four historical stagings from the Margo Korableva Performance Theatre in Tbilisi. Performed in slow, looping sequences, these actions, such as hitting a ball, spinning a spoon, and kissing goodbye, are stripped of narrative and intention. What remains are gestures: isolated, familiar, and almost intimate.

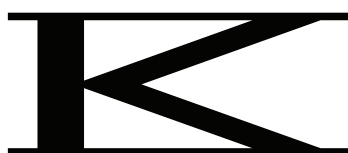
Performance and painting here are not separate disciplines but two modalities of imprinting and vanishing. Serpas draws them together into a porous whole, where images emerge through contact and gestures detach from resolution. What unfolds is muddled terrain where the boundaries between movement and mark, representation and disappearance, merge.

Neither narrative nor sensation remains—what endures are the bodies and acts remembered and repeated, the memory of something barely held and fleeting.

Ser Serpas

Of my life

13 June–
21 Sep. 2025



Ser Serpas: *Of my life*

Time seems to pass imperceptibly in a fleeting moment, and yet its traces remain. Its effect becomes visible in repetition: nothing repeats exactly, and no copy is ever identical. Every replication contains a difference, a subtle shift, a barely perceptible fracture.

Ser Serpas' method follows this principle: after painting in multiple layers, she overlays a second canvas while the paint is still wet. She then presses and rolls the canvases together before pulling them apart. The result is a transfer from one surface to the other; not a mirror image, but an imprint shaped by subtle, unique differences that reveal the process behind it. When canvases of differing sizes are used, the transferred paint becomes not just an imprint of the original but a painterly framing of it. Paint oozes out at the edges or spills beyond the borders. Some canvases even bear footprints or other vestiges of the studio, revealing random yet meaningful evidence of a physical painting process where presence and absence are inextricably linked.

Perpetual Slippage

This strategy of replication by means of deviation continues throughout the exhibition *Of my life* at Kunsthalle Basel. At first glance, the paintings appear as a cohesive series, conventionally installed in the space. The viewer is confronted by fleshy and blurred larger-than-life figures that never fully materialize, defying a clear definition. The focus isn't on portraiture but on what remains of it. These doubled images point not to likeness but to loss. Just as the image begins to take shape, it slips away again. Identity isn't presented, it's suggested as something that continually evades capture.

Serpas also employs a strategy of estrangement when selecting and processing her image sources. The bodies she depicts come from a digital archive generated by artificial intelligence. But the source material isn't the focus; what matters is its transformation, what has been fragmented or enlarged.

Architectural Loops

As visitors move through all five rooms, the exhibition reveals itself as a loop, a circular arrangement. Some figures seem to repeat, but in fact, they are impressions directly resulting from the artist's doubling technique. The paintings appear in two architecturally similar rooms that mirror each other. This spatial arrangement translates Serpas' artistic principle into the exhibition layout itself. The setup brings the logic of imprinting into physical space and reinforces the key strategies of her painting. Thus, the exhibition space becomes more than a container; it's an integral element of the painterly structure.

Unanchored Actions

Embedded within this are stage-like settings created by Serpas as sites for live performance. In close collaboration with the Margo Korableva Performance Theatre from Tbilisi, she reactivates their past performances as temporally displaced stagings rather than reenactments. Founded in 1994, the collective is known for its experimental, avant-garde productions that blur the lines between theater, performance, and other art forms. Under David Chikhladze's direction, the group works with what they call "relativistic synthesis," a practice involving deconstructing and recomposing existing forms. Video recordings of the original performances play on monitors at the very sites of their restaging in the gallery.

The actions of the six live performers—their circling gestures and tentative movements—seem to lack any specific goal or purpose, yet they leave visible traces: empty coffee cups or scattered beans. What also remain are gestures frozen in repetition, moving slowly, seemingly out of context. Alongside secondary image carriers, such as paint-smeared studio floors and walls, the exhibition space also features kitchen utensils, a film clip from Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), remnants of past rehearsals, masks, and found objects.

Serpas' works challenge the way we see and replace recognition with experience. We're never just looking at the image itself, but also at what it displaces, avoids, or withholds. *Of my life* is not simply an exhibition; it is an invitation to consider images not as fixed meanings, but as fragile, shifting bodies that are vulnerable, resistant, and open to change.

Room 5

- Untitled, 2025
Oil on canvas
l 215.9 × 238.76 cm
- m 195.58 × 152.4 cm
- n 304.8 × 279.4 cm
- o 215.9 × 259.08 cm
- p 340.36 × 304.8 cm
- q 182.88 × 215.9 cm
- s 287.02 × 243.84 cm
- t 213.36 × 251.46 cm
- r Oil on plastic film
307.34 × 195.58 cm

Room 4

- David Chikhladze
Kitchen Drama, 1993
Original performed by David Chikhladze with assistance
Performed at the Tbilisi City State Museum, 1993
Video
4 min 46 sec, looped
Courtesy the Margo Korableva Performance Theatre, Tbilisi

Kitchen Drama, 1993/2025
Performance
approx. 40 min
Performers: Nini Kobaladze, Ia Re, and David Chikhladze

Room 3

- Margo Korableva Performance Theatre
Margo Arena 2, 1995
Original performed by Nunuka Khizanishvili, Maggie Burchuladze, Irina Grigolava, Irina Mikaberidze, Aleko Shugladze, Lasha Mikaberidze, Shota Iatashvili, Maia Tsikoridze, and Tamuna Noselidze
Performed at the Iveria Complex, Tbilisi, 1995
Video
5 min 21 sec, looped
Courtesy the Margo Korableva Performance Theatre, Tbilisi

Margo Arena 2, 1995/2025
Performance
approx. 40 min
Performers: Yeonji Han, Nini Kobaladze, Ia Re, and Yann Slattery

Foyer

- Margo Korableva Performance Theatre
Om Mani Padhme Hum, 1998
Original performed by Thea Chanturia, Nino Megrelishvili, Gvantsa Rekhviashvili, Aleko Shugladze, and Zurab Rtvelishvili
Performed at the Tbilisi State Ballet School, 1998
Video
7 min 33 sec, looped
Courtesy the Margo Korableva Performance Theatre, Tbilisi

Om Mani Padhme Hum, 1998/2025
Performance
approx. 40 min
Performers: Nini Kobaladze, Ia Re, Yeonji Han, and Caro Wuttke

Room 2

- Margo Korableva Performance Theatre
Kali Yuga Hysteria, 1997
Original performed by Nunuka Khizanishvili, Maggie Burchuladze, George Bundovani, Zurab Rtvelishvili, George Gabunia, Irina Grigolava, and Lasha Mikaberidze
Costume: Gela Kuprashvili
Performed at the Aura Club, Tbilisi, 1997
Video
14 min 44 sec, looped
Courtesy the Margo Korableva Performance Theatre, Tbilisi

Kali Yuga Hysteria, 1997/2025
Performance
approx. 40 min
Costume: Selected and styled by Tamuna Karumidze from the archive of her label, TAMRA
Performers: Nini Kobaladze, Ia Re, Yann Slattery, and Caro Wuttke

Room 1

- Untitled, 2025
Oil on canvas
- a 243.84 × 292.1 cm
- b 182.88 × 142.24 cm
- c 304.8 × 246.38 cm
- d 243.84 × 157.48 cm
- e 300.36 × 152.4 cm
- f 182.88 × 241.3 cm
- g 243.84 × 355.6 cm
- h 198.12 × 152.4 cm
- i 252.73 × 213.36 cm
- j 287.02 × 304.8 cm
- k Oil on plastic film
198.12 × 152.4 cm

The exhibition is made possible through the generous support of the LUMA Foundation and the Isaac Dreyfus-Bernheim Foundation.

L U M A
F O U N D A T I O N

isaac
dreyfus
bernheim
FOUNDATION/STIFTUNG

The mediation projects are realized through the generous support of the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, the Thomas and Doris Ammann Foundation, and the Canton of Basel-Stadt.

Thanks to

Meret Luisa Olympia Aeschbach, Alexis Blum, Anna von Brühl, Ana Castro, David Chikhladze, Karolina Dankow, Lorenzo De Bellis, Pascale Eisner, Maxwell Graham, Yeonij Han, Quinn Harrelson, Maja Hoffmann, Mirco Joao-Pedro, Nini Kobaladze, Theodor Lang, Nika Lelashvili, Lisa Offermann, Marina Olsen, Ia Re, Yann Slattery, Michael Szelwach, and Caro Wuttke

The artist wishes to thank

Mom, Quinn, Lisa, Nika, Nini, Nina, Marina, Karolina, Maxwell, Claire, Carlye, Sam, Gui, Saam, Sitara, Baptiste, Henry, Dora, Connor, Medjid, Tristan, Elene, Jeff, Nash, Thea, Caroline, Paolo, Camilla, Nils, Rati, Thistle, Mariam, Glenn, Rain, Rufio, Dan, Tina, Megan, Jake, Ramsey, Jan, Nancy, James, Yasemin, Hari, Daniel, Olivier, Evan, Brad, Sem, Mireille, Mohamed, David, and David.
Thank you for changing my life. Lives are hard to change.

Kunsthalle Basel / Basler Kunstverein is generously supported by the Canton of Basel-Stadt.



Kanton Basel-Stadt

Kultur

All restaged performances commissioned by Kunsthalle Basel
Directed by Ser Serpas and the Margo Korableva Performance Theatre, Tbilisi

Sound: Ser Serpas

Performed by David Chikhladze, Yeonij Han, Nini Kobaladze, Ia Re, Ser Serpas, Yann Slattery, and Caro Wuttke

Performances are scheduled for 12.06.2025, 16.–20.06.2025

Original performances conceived by David Chikhladze

Graphic design by PORTO ROCHA; Studio SMS (Alix Stria & Katharina Shafiei-Nasab)

Copy-edited by Amanda Gomez

The Kunsthalle Basel bookshop stocks publications on Ser Serpas alongside its broader selection of art books. You will find a selection of publications related to the artist in the Kunsthalle Basel library.

More information at kunsthallebasel.ch

Public Programs

Mal•Mal, in German and English

17.09.2025, Wednesday, 6–8 p.m.

Life drawing from a model in the current exhibition; materials will be provided.

Mittwoch-Matinee, in German

30.07.2025, Wednesday, 10 a.m.–12 noon

The current exhibitions are explored at lunchtime as part of the series of events organized by museen basel.

Afterwards, participants can engage in lively dialogue with refreshments on the terrace of Kunsthalle Basel.

Price: 10 CH

Thursdays at Kunsthalle Basel

Espresso Tour, in German

17.07.2025, Thursday, 5:30 p.m.

The exhibition's key points are presented in twenty minutes, accompanied by an espresso ice cream.

Sundays at Kunsthalle Basel

Public guided tours, in German

06.07.2025, Sunday, 4:30 p.m.

03.08.2025, Sunday, 4:30 p.m.

Director's Tour, with Mohamed Almusibli, in English

10.08.2025, Sunday, 4:30 p.m.

Registration at kunstvermittlung@kunsthallebasel.ch

Curatorial Tour, with Lena Katharina Reuter (Head of Exhibitions), in German

31.08.2025, Sunday, 3 p.m.

Registration at kunstvermittlung@kunsthallebasel.ch

Espresso Tour, in English

07.09.2025, Sunday, 3 p.m.

The exhibition's key points are presented in twenty minutes, accompanied by an espresso.

Tandem Tour with S AM Swiss Architecture Museum, in German

14.09.2025, Sunday, 3 p.m.

A joint tour through both institutions' exhibitions highlights the intersections between architecture and art.

Program for Young People

Language as Material: A workshop with found objects, text, and poetry

Inspired by the exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel, you'll go on a short group trip to collect found objects. In a creative writing workshop, you'll transform it into a new story through text, staging, and movement.

Price: Free of charge

For children and teenagers aged 12–16

This offer is also available for school classes.

Further information at: kunstvermittlung@kunsthallebasel.ch