

Discover the Best Installations from Art Basel's 2023 Edition

No other creative platform offers such an immediate reflection of the current state of the arts and artistic production than Switzerland's signature fair

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Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #652*, 2023. © Cindy Sherman

Art Basel in Basel is back! After three years of coping with the Covid-19 pandemic, the most important event in the global art world is finally back at full capacity and seems to be better than ever. Featuring 284 galleries from 36 countries and territories, Art Basel in Switzerland is the one single event in the art world that is unmissable. Running through June 18, the sprawling fair showcases an array of major works by established and emerging artists, larger-than-life installations, cultural discussions, films and public projects. Put simply, there is no other creative platform that offers such an immediate reflection of the current state of the arts and artistic production.

“Art Basel holds a truly unique position for us, because this is where everything started more than 50 years ago,” Art Basel CEO Noah Horowitz shared with *Galerie*. “We operate on a global scale and run four fairs across three continents, but it all originated here with this show in this city and it remains the heart and the unwavering foundation of our business. Galleries present their most ambitious and highest quality artworks—from 20th century masterpieces to some of the most pioneering contemporary positions. Together this makes

Art Basel in Basel the most important annual event in the global art market.”

Living up to Horowitz's enthusiasm, exhibitors in the fair's main Galleries section made the extra effort to bring their best works. Standout paintings included Joan Mitchell's large lyrical abstraction from 1959 (the year the passionate American painter permanently moved to France) on view at David Zwirner, while Thaddeus Ropac presented Georg Baselitz's 1965 figurative canvas *Spekulatius*, which depicts a loose, masterful rendering of a down-and-out worker, from the German artist's seminal *Heroes* series.

Galerie Georges-Philippe and Nathalie Vallois brought a dynamic 1967 sculpture by the French Nouveau-Realist artist Arman. Using a balanced accumulation of new car parts provided by automaker Renault, the



artist shaped his *Accumulation Renault n°101 (La Victoire de Salemotrice)* to mimic the famous *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, a Hellenistic masterpiece that has been exhibited at the top of the Louvre Museum's main staircase in Paris since 1884.

Two equally intriguing more recent artworks in the Galleries section were Cindy Sherman's 2023 *Untitled #652* photograph at Hauser & Wirth and Bony Ramirez's painted and collaged *Strelitzia Nicolai*, also from 2023, at Jeffrey Deitch. In the celebrated artist's new series of works, which debuted during Zurich Art Weekend just prior to the fair, Sherman collaged and then digitally accented parts of her own face to construct the identities of a variety of characters. Ramirez, who will have a September solo show at Deitch, used a more analog method of collage to marvelously merge a Latina nude with an exotic white bird of paradise plant.



Sadie Coles HQ planned its Galleries booth around a one-person exhibition of new work by Los Angeles artist Laura Owen. Conceived as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (a complete work of art) the installation explores the artist's diverse approach to media, while drawing on her own personal biography and reoccurring themes from over the course of her career. The works on view include a site-specific wallpaper painting embedded into the wall, three sculptural installations of tables and handmade books and a new mosaic tile painting, informed by the artist's recent commission for LaGuardia airport in New York.

Top: Joan Mitchell, *Untitled*, c. 1959. © Estate of Joan Mitchell.
Bottom: Installation view, Arman, *Accumulation Renault n°101 (La Victoire de Salemotrice)* at Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois.

Notable presentations in the Feature section, uniquely focused on art-historical projects,

include a survey of Modernist works on paper spanning over 60 years by the Russian pioneer of abstraction Sonia Delaunay at Galerie Zlotowski; the re-staging of the Tunisian-American artist Colette Lumiere's 1977 sleep performance as the *Recently Discovered Ruins of a Dream* at Company Gallery; and large-scale black-and-white collographs, depicting a woman navigating the sacred mythologies of a secret Afro-Cuban society, by the late Cuban artist Belkis Ayón, whose exceptional works were a standout in "The Milk of Dreams" exhibition in the 2022 Venice Biennale, at David Castillo.



Top: Installation view of Laura Owens at Sadie Coles HQ. © Laura Owens. Bottom: Installation view of Genesis Belanger at Perrotin.

In the Statements sector, dedicated to emerging artists from around the globe, Simone Subal Gallery presented “Surveillance of Desire,” Baseera Khan’s first solo show outside of the United States. A queer femme artist of Indian-Afghani descent, Khan was the winner of *The Exhibit: Finding the Next Great Artist*, a reality TV series that aired on MTV and the Smithsonian Channel earlier this year. Their fair presentation featured photographs made in collaboration with Brooklyn Museum curators and conservators to establish new dialogues with Islamic objects and a 3D printed bust of the artist fused with a 14th-century Nepalese sculpture from the collection of New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Among the outstanding projects in Parours, which showcased 24 site-specific public art installations that were presented by exhibiting galleries around the Münsterplatz and Basel’s city center, were sculptures by three talented artists in a private garden near the Kunstmuseum Basel. Galleria Continua presented Berlinde De Bruyckere’s tribute (a teetering bronze figure draped in lead, representing the

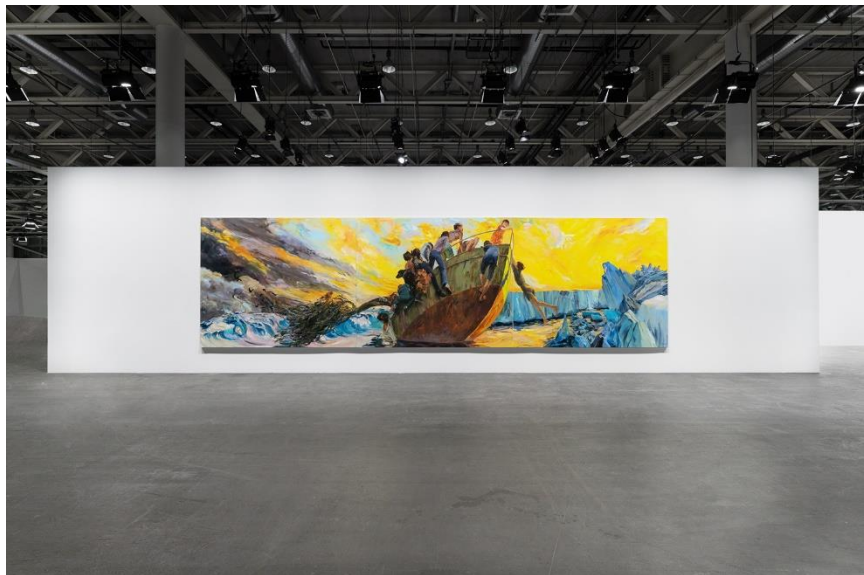
burden carried) to healthcare workers who provided care to victims of Covid-19. Gagosian shared Thomas Houseago’s 2021 bronze of an abstract striding figure, titled *Gold Walking Man*, which had the look of a towering ancient idol from a lost civilization. And artist Wyatt Kahn offered two Cor-Ten steel sculptures, co-presented by Galerie Eva Presenhuber and Xavier Hufkens, of commonplace objects transformed into giant geometric forms, which pay homage to both the readymade and Modernist public sculpture.

In the section of the fair labeled Kabinett, galleries could spotlight distinct curated exhibitions within their main booths. One of the best of these 13 projects was Genesis Belanger’s display of hand-crafted, idiosyncratic versions of everyday things set in psychologically charged scenarios, on view at Perrotin. The Editions section’s gallery presentations were also peppered throughout the fair, with Two Palms offerings of etchings of underground comics artist R. Crumb’s self-effacing drawings with handwritten text being a surprise amongst the other prints and multiples on view elsewhere. And one of our favorites in the Film section was Judd Tully and Harold Crooks’s 2022 documentary *The Melt Goes on Forever: The Art & Times of David Hammons*, which offers a great overview of the secretive artist’s life and work.

Last, but not least, Unlimited presented 76 large-scale installations by established and emerging artists in a hall that’s bigger than most spaces for a full art fair. David Zwirner presented four projects in the sector, including the debut of Gerhard Richter’s magnificent *STRIP-TOWER*, a multi-panel, digitally derived,

glass abstraction that the German artist conceived as a means for addressing painting and image-making rather than a form of pure sculpture. Other more physical paintings that were as equally as arresting as Richter's colorful striped tower were Lisson Gallery's presentation of Yu Hong's massive 2021 triptych *The Ship of Fools*, which references Hieronymus Bosch's eponymous canvas but depicts a group of youngsters struggling to keep a boat afloat in dangerous waters, and Günther Förg's 2005 *Untitled* canvas, a giant abstract grid painting, co-presented by Galerie Bärbel Grässlin and Hauser & Wirth.

"There's something truly magical about how this city comes alive during our show," Horowitz added. "You see it on the streets; you see it in the restaurants and hotels; you see it along the banks of the Rhine River, where people swim; and, of course, in the halls of the Messe and the city's extraordinary cultural institutions. I think it's safe to say that there's arguably no place else in the world where you can experience such world-class cultural programming on such an intimate scale. A city that truly punches far above its weight in the cultural sphere for over 50 years, Basel has been our home and Art Basel is as committed to this city as this city is also to us."



Top: Installation view of Thomas Houseago, Gold Walking Man, 2021. Bottom: Installation view of Yu Hong, The Ship of Fools, 2021 at Unlimited.