Art

10 Must-See Shows during Art Basel in Basel 2024

Courtney Tanz

ALL CAPS EDITOR

Installation view of Philippe Decrauzat, "Minimalist, Op Art and Optical Painting," Kunstmuseum Basel, Gegenwart, Basel, Switzerland, June 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne. Photo: Philippe Decrauzat and Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne.

Summertime in Switzerland means one thing: Basel is getting ready to welcome art lovers from around the world. Art Basel (20th, held from June 12th to 16th), has a lot to offer, but so does the rest of town. Beyond Messeplatz, the art fair is a moment to experience it across the city, and is just an hour's train ride from Zürich, where Zürich Art Weekend takes place June 7th through 9th.

This year, as part of Art Basel's Parcours section, public art installations curated by the Swiss Institute's Stefanie Heeder will line Clarastrasse away the Rhine, bringing a taste of contemporary art to the riverfront. Plan to visit the Rhine Boardwalk, too, since there's more to see in Basel if you venture away from the fair and into the museums and galleries.

Here, we select 10 museum and gallery shows worth wandering away from the fair bustle for.

"When We See Us. A Century of Black Figuration in Painting"

Kunstmuseum Basel

Through Oct. 27

Installation view of "When We See Us. A Century of Black Figuration in Painting," Kunstmuseum Basel, Gegenwart, Basel, Switzerland, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne.

Tandaiso Chibanda and Kgaio Kuoch, curator and chief curator respectively of the Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town, have curated this comprehensive show, which sets forth new artists from the African continent and diasporic capture their lived experiences as subjects of their own art.

A selection of works from 156 artists, including Romare Bearden, Earl Cunningham, Kerr Thillet, Schwanede Garcia, and Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, is shown under six distinct themes: "The Black Figure," "Black Life," "Black Spirituality," "Black Abstraction," and "Triumph and Entanglement." With the same magnetic pull as When They See Us, Ava DuVernay's documentary series on the Central Park Five case, this exhibition explores how Black artists portray their own subjectivity and, in doing so, offers a varied vision of Black people in their own lives.

Vilhelm Hammershøi, "Silence"

Hauser & Wirth

Through July 13

Vilhelm Hammershøi, Danish, Portrait of the artist's wife, Ingeborg Ibsen, 1899. Oil on canvas, 19 1/2 x 17 3/4 in. (49.5 x 45.1 cm). Courtesy of private collection.

The newly opened Basel gallery of Hauser & Wirth will feature a rotating exhibition of Danish artist Vilhelm Hammershøi, curated by Dr. Tate Adams. the historical survey features 16 pieces by the 19th-century artist that capture the interiors of Copenhagen's architecture alongside London cityscapes from the turn of the century. Inspired by the Dutch Old Masters, like Johannes Vermeer, Hammershøi employs the darker muted colors of the Danish Golden Age to create moody pieces with an extraordinary attention to light-some that demand quiet contemplation.

"Cloud Chronicles"

Fondation Beyeler

Through Aug. 11

Installation view of "Cloud Chronicles", at Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, 2024. © 2024 Pro Litteris, Zurich. Photo: Sylvette Atkinson. Courtesy of Fondation Beyeler.

Connections are at the core of this summer show, an experimental project transforming the museum and its surrounding gardens into a haven of contemporary art. Building interrelationships between individual works from the museum's collection and newly commissioned paintings, sculptures, films, and installations, the show includes artists such as Ai Weiwei, Alexandre Bailly, Michael Andrews and Wanderley Dunga alongside plenty of conceptual artists, such as Frida Escobedo, Peter Fischli, Kois Jeong & Gilles Mendes, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Adrián Villar Rojas. In partnership with the LUMA foundation, and with Philippe Parreno, Pierre Huyghe, and Tomás Saraceno, the show's curated team, the ambitious, all-encompassing exhibition is envisioned as a "living organism that changes and transforms."

Toyin Ojih Odutola, "Ilé Oriaku"

Kunsthaus Basel

June 7–Sept. 1

Toyin Ojih Odutola, installation view of "Ilé Oriaku" at Kunsthaus Basel, 2024. Photo by Philipp Hänger. Courtesy of Kunsthaus Basel.

Housed in a stunning 19th-century Neoclassical building in the heart of Basel's Old Town, the Kunsthaus Basel is dedicated to presenting comprehensive institutional exhibitions of internationally recognised artists for the first time in Switzerland. Among them is Nigerian-American artist Toyin Ojih Odutola, whose showcase of brand new works creates character-rich narratives through a combination of pastel, charcoal, watercolor, pencil, charcoal, and graphite. Ojih Odutola's textured paintings capture a unique, distorted aesthetic, as if seen through water.

Ebecho Muslimova, "Whispers"

Bernhard, Zürich

June 7—July 26

Ebecho Muslimova
LOVERS, THREAD, 2024
Oil on canvas
Pièce-unique

Ebecho Muslimova
LOVERS, WITH LOVE, LIKE WORM RIDDLE, 2024
Oil on canvas
Sold

In the Zürich half of a two-part presentation (the other show, Emanuel Ludwig Gerbner's "Ghosts," is in Berlin), Ebecho Muslimova's series of paintings portray Fairies, the artist's alter ego, in flat, cartoonish lines. This signature character frequently finds herself in contrived, surrealistic situations, visualizing dance as Gaga-esque grotesquery and skyscrapers and modern urban domesticity in chaotic, irreverent paintings. Muslimova offers a vision of a liberated, playful female body.

"EXPRESSIVE! The Nude in Modern Art"

Galerie Hervé & Ketterer

Through Aug. 17

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Stehende Akte mit Hut, Blau und Rosa (Female Nude)
Oil on canvas
Signature Collection

Karl Hofer
Liegende Akte
Oil on canvas
Signature Collection

While formal portraiture had previously required long sittings, artists began taking a new approach to portraying the nude form in the early twentieth century, using quick-drying materials and the Expressionist movement to "quarter-hour nude" technique, asking models to pose for less than 15 minutes. Then unusual compositions, which place emphasis on the artist's own impressions over physical reality, continue to influence abstract depictions of the naked form today. Featuring paintings by George Grosz and Gianni Bisiello alongside watercolors by Eric Nolde and Karl Hofer, this show at Galerie Hervé & Ketterer offers unusual depictions of human figures, this show uses the body as a conduit to explore the human condition.

Jim Shaw, "The Past is Never Dead. It's Not Even Past."

Kunsthaus Biel, Biel

June 9–Aug. 25

Jim Shaw, Wiffle Ball Hate Mask, 2006. Mixed media on found wiffle ball and plastic. Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin.

Located an hour's train ride from Basel, the quaint village of Biel is home to an incredible contemporary art institution that draws international crowds. Jim Shaw's show, which includes photographs, study drawings, sculptures, and a dozen paintings by Jim Shaw that offer insight into the artist's world. With references to pop culture and Hollywood, Shaw uses sharp visual language to critique mainstream society's values.

Curated in collaboration with the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp and supported by Gagosian, the Kunsthaus exhibition also features the immersive installation The Electronic Monster and Thirteen Ghosts (2004). This layered track and white film empirical experience and movie sustains is quite fun at the shifts in American culture, while showing how pop culture influences our belief system.

Not Vital, "Silence"

Galerie Tschudi, Zürich

June 7–Aug. 3

Not Vital, Landscape, 2006. Photo by Bertrand Huber. Courtesy Galerie Tschudi and Galerie Gisela Capitain.

Not Vital, Earth Formula, 2006. Courtesy Galerie Gisela Capitain.

Not Vital is one of the foremost sculptors of our time. Over his decades-long career, he has produced an enigmatic visual language exploring our built environments through large-scale sculptures, some of which he calls "Sacrum" (a term describing hybrids of sculpture and architecture).

Featuring greatly new works by the Swiss-born artist, "Silence" presents new paintings and sculptures that incorporate disembodied heads. Vital combines a neutral palette with a deep blue pop of color that serves as a thread through this solo show in Zürich. Evoking Dadaist ideas and inspired by his travels across the globe, this show represents a different side of the artist's practice.

Pedro Wirz, "Substance Shifts"

PHILLIPPZOLLINGER, Zürich

June 7—July 20

Pedro Wirz, "Nothing will Happen", Photo by Ivan Jaime, Courtesy of the artist and PHILLIPPZOLLINGER.

Brazilian sculptor Pedro Wirz collaborated with a material scientist to create adaptive, reusable polymers for this exhibition focused on environmental degradation and the consumerism that underpins the climate crisis. This series of sculptures experiments with new materials that can be reshaped and reconstructed repeatedly, a statement about the need to address the disposable nature of our modern culture, including in the art world. In reimagining materiality in this way, the exhibition explores the potential for a future of more multifaceted images, including that myth of Sisyphus, who transformed into a bee to escape the pull Apollo. In The Boy with Many Friends (2024), a mask-like form in clay sculpture adorned with bright flowers, this metamorphosis is on full view.

Marina Adams, "To a World Full of Others"

von Bartha

June 11—July 27

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Marina Adams
Marrakech, 2024
von Bartha
Price on request

Marina Adams
North to the Back Door, 2023
von Bartha
Price on request

The vibrant colors of Marina Adams's paintings capture the brilliance of her life lived between New York and Parma, Italy. Playing with form and movement, Adams employs soft lines in the trademark geometric patterns that signify her unique visual language. Adams has been exhibiting for decades, but only received acclaim in the 2010s, and this will be her first exhibition in Switzerland. It includes 13 new paintings and several drawings, inspired by the patterns of Moorish tiles and rugs. ■

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