
FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT ART BASEL IN BASEL

Convention Center and Exhibition Space

Art Basel in Basel takes place in Halls 1 and 2 of Messe Basel on Messeplatz in Basel, Switzerland. Hall 1, built in 1999 by the Swiss architect and art collector, Theo Hotz and extended in 2013 by renowned Basel architects Herzog & de Meuron hosts the Unlimited and Magazines sectors as well as Conversations. Hall 2, a landmark building from the 1950s built by Hans Hoffmann, hosts the Galleries, Statements, Feature and Edition sectors.

The Art Basel show in Basel is presented across 27'500 square meters of exhibition space, spread across Hall 1 and Hall 2.

Visitor figures

In 2019 the show attracted an attendance of nearly 93,000 over six show days. In 2024, the show attracted the strongest attendance since 2019, with an overall attendance of 91,000 over six show days.

Historic landmarks

1970

Art Basel is founded by Basel art gallerists Ernst Beyeler, Trudi Bruckner and Balz Hilt. The show proves to be a success from the very start: 90 galleries and 30 publishers from 10 countries exhibit at the inaugural show, attracting 16,300 visitors.

1973

Art Basel hosts its first special exhibition - 'American Art after Jackson Pollock'. A series of "one-country" special exhibitions follows, featuring artists of Italy, Britain, Spain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria, Israel, Holland, and Belgium.

1974

Introduction of the Neue Tendenzen ('New Trends') sector designed to promote young artists. 50 galleries take part, including Castelli from New York, Sonnabend from Paris, Sperone from Turin, and Verna and Ziegler from Zurich. An exhibitors committee of leading gallerists and experts is established to review and select applying galleries.

1975

Only 6 years after its founding, Art Basel reaches its present size of circa 300 exhibitors. The participating galleries come from 21 countries, attracting 37,000 visitors.

1979

The Perspective platform replaces the Neue Tendenzen sector. It features solo shows of 16 little-known artists, among them John Armleder, Tony Cragg, Peter Fischli and David Weiss, Beat Streuli and Martin Disler, Julian Opie, Jean-Frédéric Schnyder, Helmut Federle, and General Idea – all of whom will soon become prominent artists on the international art scene.

1989

To celebrate the 150th anniversary of photography, 16 galleries belonging to the International Association of Photography Art Dealers present top-quality photographs spanning the entire history of the medium. Through its five subsequent thematic Art Photography exhibitions, Art Basel becomes one of the artworld's leading platforms for promoting the medium.

1993

After two years as a separate fair, the Edition sector is integrated into Art Basel, with 15 top international multiples galleries taking part. The new Young Galleries sector promotes galleries offering a program of young artists not yet firmly established in the market.

1995

Introduction of the Art Video Forum platform. Pipilotti Rist and Enrique Fontanilles are the first recipients of the video art prize endowed by the main sponsor, the Swiss Bank Corporation (which later merged with Union Bank of Switzerland to become UBS).

1996

Young Galleries is replaced by Statements, presenting 23 solo shows by young artists, establishing this sector as a launch for international recognition. International stars who have made their first major appearance at Statements over the years include Ghada Amer, Kader Attia, Vanessa Beecroft, Pierre Huyghe, William Kentridge, Mariko Mori, Ernesto Neto, João Onofre, Jorge Pardo, Manfred Pernice, Elisabeth Peyton, Ugo Rondinone, Hans Schabus, Gregor Schneider, Kara Walker and Gary Webb.

1999

The Film sector – devoted to films by and about artists – debuts at the Stadtkino Basel.

2000

Sam Keller becomes Art Basel's Director.

Introduction of the Unlimited platform, which transcends the concept of the classic exhibition booth with an open-plan exhibition environment that plays host to all types of ambitious contemporary media: installation, monumental sculpture, large-scale painting, video work, and performance art. The sector is curated by Simon Lamunière until 2012. First special exhibition devoted to Artist Books from 2000 to 2005, an art form ordinarily accorded marginal attention at art fairs. Its success led to two follow-up exhibitions: the Small Press Scene in the 60s and 70s, and Artist Records, a store/exhibit featuring recordings produced or designed by artists.

2004

Art Basel launches Art Basel Conversations: Panel discussions with leading members of the art world providing privileged access to first-hand information on diverse aspects of collecting and exhibiting art. Panelists include prominent art collectors, museum directors, biennale curators, artists, art critics, and architects. Under the title of Public Art Projects, projects of an institutional scale are presented in the spacious, revamped exhibition area on Messeplatz.

2005

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2006

Art Basel launches Premiere, under a special sector that first features galleries new to the main sector, then evolves to focus on juxtapositions between artists of different cultural backgrounds or generations.

2007

Annette Schönholzer, Marc Spiegler, and Cay Sophie Rabinowitz take over Art Basel's directorship from Sam Keller. From 2008 the shows are run by co-directors, Annette Schönholzer and Marc Spiegler.

2009

Marking Art Basel's 40th anniversary, the show presents, 'Il Tempo del Postino,' a visual arts "opera" of time-based art by some 20 artists and teams is directed by curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and artists Philippe Parreno, Anri Sala, and Rirkrit Tiravanija. The presentation, which premiered at the 2007 Manchester International Festival, was organized by Art Basel in cooperation with Fondation Beyeler and Theater Basel.

2010

Expanding the show beyond Messeplatz, the Parours sector debuts, with the goal of presenting site-specific public artworks and performances by renowned artists and emerging talents in the historical neighbourhoods of Basel. The new Feature sector, replacing Premiere sector, offers gallerists a chance to participate at Art Basel with historical material, solo shows by artists of all ages and precise curatorial juxtapositions. Like Kabinett in Miami Beach, Feature rapidly proves to be a favorite sector for curators and connoisseur collectors.

2012

Gianni Jetzer replaces Simon Lamunière as curator of the Unlimited sector in Basel.

2013

The new Hall 1 designed by renowned Basel architects Herzog & de Meuron housed the Unlimited, Statements and Magazine sectors, along with the auditorium used for the Conversation and Salon panels. Florence Derieux curates for the first time the Parours sector which takes over the Klingental neighbourhood of Basel. Tadashi Kawamata is commissioned to create an intervention on Messeplatz for the duration of the show.

2014

Statements returned to Hall 2 after nine years in Hall 1, giving the younger generation of artists and galleries a more prominent placement.

PanteraPantera from Basel created an architectural installation on Messeplatz which was inspired by 'Zerzura' – a mystical oasis and white town in the southern Sahara.

2015

A significant reconfiguration of the downstairs floorplan in Hall 2 moved 57 galleries to new positions – representing the biggest such shift at the show in the last decade. Bringing galleries showing work from 1900 to 1970 in closer proximity to each other, it created a stronger focus for their outstanding historical material. The Film program was selected for the first time by film curator and lecturer Maxa Zoller. For the duration of Art Basel, 'DO WE DREAM UNDER THE SAME SKY' by conceptual artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, was installed on Messeplatz in Basel.

2016

Samuel Leuenberger for the first time curates the Parours sector, presenting 19 artistic projects with a 'human' or 'figurative' stance across the Basel Münsterplatz area. A new structure by Los Angeles-based artist Oscar Tuazon was installed on Messeplatz for the duration of Art Basel. An adaptation of Steve Baer's 'Zome House' (1972), Tuazon's project hosted the second edition of Baer's 'Alloy Conference', first held in 1969.

2017

Swiss artist Claudia Comte (1983) transformed Basel's Messeplatz into an immersive funfair. Made especially for the show, 'NOW I WON' actively engaged the public to compete in a range of games and competitions.

2018

'Basilea', a Creative Time project commissioned by Art Basel for this year's Messeplatz, was curated by Elvira Dyangani Ose, Senior Curator at Creative Time, and brought together the artists Lara Almarcegui, Isabel Lewis and Santiago Cirugeda-led architecture studio Recetas Urbanas.

2019

Among the fair's most talked-about highlights was 'Aggregate' (2017-2019) a performative environment by Romanian artist Alexandra Pirici presented on the Messeplatz in a purpose-built pavilion designed by Andrei Dinu. Curated by Cecilia Alemani, 'Aggregate' (2017-2019) brought together over 60 performers that formed a vast collective body through the accumulation of individual gestures, enveloping the viewers in intricate choreographies and rehearsed compositions. Further to this a new sliding-scale pricing system was successfully introduced, providing additional support for smaller and mid-size galleries.

2020

After extensive analysis of the current global situation, Art Basel has decided not to hold its Basel show.

The fair was scheduled to take place at Messe Basel from September 17 to September 20, 2020, after having previously been postponed from June. The decision to cancel the show was made after thorough consultation with many Art Basel gallerists, collectors, partners, as well as external experts. The primary considerations were the fundamental health and safety risks related to the pandemic, the financial risks for exhibitors and partners, the ongoing impediments to international travel, and the fact that the regulatory environment around large-scale events has yet to be finalized by the Swiss Federal Council.

2021

Art Basel staged the first full-scale international art fair since 2019 bringing together 272 premier galleries from 33 countries and territories. In addition to showcasing exceptional art within its Galleries, Feature, Statements, and Edition sectors, the fair also presented 62 large-scale artworks in Unlimited; 20 site-specific projects as part of Parcours and two performances by artists Monster Chetwynd and Cecilia Bengolea on the Messeplatz. The debut of Art Basel Live amplified the onsite presentations in Basel. Prior to the show's opening, Art Basel announced a one-time CHF 1.5 million solidarity fund to mitigate the financial risk for participating galleries under the current extraordinary circumstances.

2022

The 2022 edition of Art Basel featured 289 leading international galleries from 40 countries and territories. The Messeplatz project was a large-scale floor installation modeled on a hopscotch grid titled 'Out of Sight' by Lawrence Weiner. The 23rd Annual Baloise Art Prize was awarded to two artists exhibiting in Statements: Helena Uambembe, presented by Jahmek Contemporary Art and Tourmaline, presented by Chapter NY. Art Basel hosted its first Unlimited Night, offering visitors the opportunity to explore the sector during extended opening hours, with a program of performances by Ari Benjamin Meyers and Nora Turato, and a special event with Grammy-Award-winning artist Chance the Rapper. Art Basel also hosted Parcours Night, an evening of live performances throughout Basel's city center.

2023

The 2023 edition of Art Basel's flagship fair in Basel concluded with highly praised presentations by 284 galleries from 36 countries and territories and notable sales throughout the week. 21 galleries participated in the fair for the first time, while 12 galleries made their debut in the fair's main sector to present the full scope of their program. The fair debuted Kabinett, a mainstay sector in the Hong Kong and Miami Beach shows which allows galleries to showcase focused presentations within their booths and dive deeper into the practices of the artists presented. Curated by Giovanni Carmine, Director of the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, Unlimited featured 76 large-scale installations and performances, with Unlimited Night on Thursday, June 15 presenting special performances by Olaf Nicolai and Augustas Serapinas during extended hours.

2024

Art Basel successfully concluded its 2024 edition with strong sales across all sectors of the market and under the leadership of new show director Maike Cruse, attracting 91,000 attendees during its VIP and public days from June 13 to 16. The event featured Agnes Denes' *Honoring Wheatfield - A Confrontation* (2024) at Messeplatz, which remains on display throughout the summer. Stefanie Hessler, Director of the Swiss Institute (SI) New York, newly curated and reconceptualized the Parcours sector, which spanned from the fairgrounds to the Rhine. The fair also expanded its public program with continuous artistic events and performances at the Merian, engaging a diverse audience. Art Basel in Basel 2024 also featured the first edition of The Art Basel Shop.

As of June 2024