

ARTWORKS

A VOICE FOR THE ARTS



THE ART OF ATTENDING ART BASEL

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As I arrived in cold and drizzly Basel, I found the city abuzz. Not only was Art Basel 39 about to start on June 2, the European soccer championship hosted by Switzerland was going to kick off in Basel on June 7. Art and soccer fans coexisted in harmony but for the week of June 2, art dominated. Like every year, hundreds of thousands of art professionals and art enthusiasts descended on the city, ready to discover the new hot

artist. I think the jury's still out as to who that artist is. As an Art Basel newbie, I was eager to get my feet wet and take in as much art as I could; the good, the bad, and the ugly.

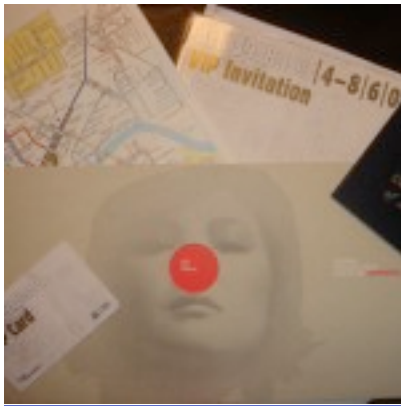


In addition to Art Basel, there were three fringe art fairs, Scope, Liste 08, and Volta4. Everyone I spoke to had a different opinion of these fairs. I think it was common consensus that the Liste 08 wasn't great. Not to be nasty but most of the art made me think of high school projects. Scope, in my humble opinion was quite good and I heard mixed reviews of Volta4. And there was also Design Miami/Basel which had a very well-designed layout of international design galleries where I spotted avant-garde Dutch fashion designers Viktor and Rolf looking around. Neon art by British artist Tracy Emin, a large-format painting/graffiti canvas by German artist Katharina Gross, an installation by Indian artist Anish Kapoor, and a photo by Iranian filmmaker/photographer Shirin Neshat were some of favorite pieces.



But it wasn't just about the art for sale. There were impressive museum exhibitions such as Soutine at the Kunstmuseum and Leger at the Beyeler Foundation. I have to add, the Beyeler Foundation is my new favorite museum. The glass and wood building designed by Renzo Piano has a magically airy and light feel. Walking through the permanent collection is like taking Modern Art 101. They have pretty much every modern master you can imagine from Cezanne and Picasso to Newman and Rothko.

And, it turns out that Art Basel-founder and art world-impresario Samuel Keller has left his position at Art Basel to head up the Beyeler Foundation-my guess is we'll soon be hearing a lot more about that museum. One major highlight of the week was seeing Patti Smith perform at Offene Kirche Elisabethen, a Gothic Church in the middle of Basel. She sang to an intimate crowd of a few hundred and, let me tell you, getting an invitation wasn't easy. She sang her own songs and threw in a few covers - namely Nirvana's "Smells like Teen Spirit" (which made me very happy) and a Bo Diddley tune in honor of his recent demise.



I tried to maximize every day by scurrying around the city as much as I could, but there is so much going on it can be overwhelming. But, thanks to a seasoned Art Basel attendee, generous with her knowledge of the ins and outs, I discovered a very civilized and luxurious way to scurry. With an Art Basel/UBS VIP card, you can book complimentary chauffeured Audis to take you to different exhibitions around the city. The drivers (which I must add are all adorable and charming university students from Frankfurt) wait for you as you peruse the art and take you back to your hotel. I could get used to this! Perks aside, Art Basel's superlative reputation for being incredibly well-organized and displaying high-caliber art is absolutely justified. I'm looking forward to next year when I can pass my knowledge on to a newbie!

By Yasmine Mohseni