



Report from Art Basel 38 (June 2007)

Art Advisor and founder of Blue Tangerine Art (<http://www.bluetangerineart.com>), Trudy Montgomery, provides insights and highlights direct from the world's premier modern and contemporary art fair and its satellite shows.

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- **Art Unlimited:** contemporary artists showcased are stronger than ever; conceptual and installation works more prominent than video
- **Best of the Rest:** Volta and the young Liste satellite events show definite improvement in professionalism and quality of art, seeing some strong buying activity.
- **Private exhibitions of note:** Edvard Munch at Foundation Beyeler; Jasper Johns at Kunstmuseum
- **Spectacle Reflected:** Anish Kapoor's public art sculpture *Sky Mirror V*, reflected the good and the great come rain or shine
- **Art Conversations:** Western European museums respond to the challenges facing them
- **Show News:** The Sam Keller era comes to an end as three new directors replace the long-standing Art Basel director in September 2007

ART BASEL TRENDS

- **Biggest Yet:** Basel plays host to over a dozen art venues this year and over 300 galleries from 30 countries displaying work from over 2,000 artists at Art Basel alone, plus over 100 other galleries exhibiting at satellite shows including Volta, Liste, Scope, Design Miami/Basel, Bale Latina and Print Basel – many presenting artists for the first time before an international audience.
- **Auctions Scoop Up Best Art:** Despite galleries' complaints that there's a diminished supply of top modern art, Art Basel has continued to display a strong array of works by renowned artists. Galleries have been finding it harder to source premium pieces because collectors have been tempted

to consign works to auction houses rather than to dealers due to the recent boom in auction prices. In response, galleries are adopting the guarantees favored by auction houses as well as selling pieces from dealers' personal collections acquired long ago.

- **Better Quality Overall:** Nevertheless, an impressive array of modern art is up for sale at Art Basel's secondary (or 'resale') market. And, thankfully, the quality of art at satellite shows has improved dramatically on last year, with both boutique Volta and 'young' art fair Liste revealing some strong contemporary artworks for sale in the primary market (which offers 'first time' sales direct from artists).
- **The 'Grand Art Tour' of Europe:** Collectors and museum curators been spoilt for choice in selecting their art destinations this summer. Art Basel is competing with three major art events held concurrently: the Venice Biennale, Documenta 12 in Kassel (held every five years) and the Sculpture Project in Munster (held every 10 years). While some inevitably focus on a single event, many are opting to make a grand tour of all three.
- **European Buyers Dominate:** European collectors, particularly Swiss and German, have dominated the buying this year. Dealers noted a marked decline in the number of American buyers due to the weak dollar, record spending at the recent New York auctions and plethora of European summer art exhibitions. Nevertheless, with 200 NetJets planes hired out and UBS hosting a full house of private clients this year, Art Basel shows no long-term signs of lagging!

ART UNLIMITED

Situated next door to Art Basel, Art Unlimited showcases the work of selected contemporary artists in a 'warehouse' hall. Conceptual, installation and only a handful of video works were included this year.

Highlights:

- A water-filled series 3 BMW into which the artist lowers himself through the sunroof to sing
- Indian artist Bharti Kher's lifesize fiberglass elephant *'The skin speaks a language not its own'* was covered in hand-applied sperm-shaped bindis and sold to a Spanish collector for \$250,000.
- San Keller's *Confessional for the Art business – are there any rules* consisted of a confessional box for artists and professionals to reveal the



rules and secrets they think apply to the art business. Contravening the first rule of confessionals, however, the confessions are to be published.

BEST OF THE REST

Since there is no shortage of contemporary art on view, navigating to innovative, quality artists becomes of primary focus. Fortunately the Volta and Liste have both stepped up a gear in terms of professionalism and quality of art on view.

Volta is hitting its stride in its third year, and branding itself as a 'boutique fair' with curatorial board and installation space. Serious galleries unable as yet to secure space in the main Art Basel hall are finding they stand out and attract collectors seeking out exciting new and established contemporary artists – from Gavin Turk to Boo Retson.

Liste 07, now in its 11th year, exhibited 62 hot young galleries from as far afield as New Zealand. The sprawling brewery location adds to the collector's adventure of discovery of the youngest emerging artists.

PRIVATE EXHIBITIONS OF NOTE

- *Edvard Munch: Signs of Modern Art* at the calm and serene Beyeler Foundation, set in luxurious gardens cradling sculpture by Calder and Ellsworth Kelly.
- *Jasper Johns: An allegory of Painting 1955-65* – revealed the precursor to device and flag paintings.

SPECTACLE REFLECTED

Anish Kapoor's public art sculpture *Sky Mirror V* positioned outside the main entrance of Art Basel by London's Lisson Gallery was scooped up by Spanish Collector early in the week for over \$1million but remained in Messeplatz all week to reflect the vanities of collectors, art lovers and artists alike.



ART CONVERSATIONS

Another great set of panel discussions amongst the movers and shakers of the art world aimed at providing a fresh look at topics relevant to collectors, exhibitors and artists.

Museums – are they in crisis or merely challenged?

Sir Nicholas Serota, director of the Tate Gallery, the UK’s national museum of modern and British art, led a lively discussion with an eight-man panel on *The future of the museum in Europe*. While welcoming a private-public partnership with collectors, Serota maintained today’s museum is challenged by market forces on its resources; by the demands of globalization on its audiences; and by the demands of private collector/donors whose own collecting goals may not reflect those of the public institution. Serota’s suggestions for a new response to these challenges: museum branding; innovation in exhibiting new artists; new inflection on big artists of the 20th Century; as well as research, scholarship and value judgments by curators, met with violent agreement from his contemporaries, which included the directors of Paris’ Pompidou Center, Stockholm’s Moderna Museet and Barcelona’s MACBA.

SHOW NEWS: End of the Keller era

Art Basel management announced that show director Sam Keller, steps down after 7 years at the helm to lead the Beyeler Foundation next January, will be replaced by three successors who take their positions in September. He’ll be a tough act to follow, not least because his legacy of innovation created a brand acknowledged by the New York Times as the ‘*Olympics of the art world*’.

The three are: Marc Spiegler, a US journalist based in Zurich and editor at large of the Art Newspaper will run strategy and development; Cay Sophie Rabinowitz, senior US editor of Swiss magazine *Parkett* and a faculty member of the Parsons New School for Design will become artistic director; and Annette Schonholzer, who has served as show manager of Art Basel/Miami Beach since its inception in December 2002 will oversee organization and finances. Decisions will be taken jointly with each director having core area of responsibilities.

For more information on the current show, advice on expanding your art collection and planning your next trip to Art Basel, please contact Blue Tangerine Art Advisory Services: art@bluetangerineart.com.
