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DIARY

PLUS ÇA CHANGE

Inside Art Basel's bustling new Parisian fair

October 28, 2022 • Paris • Kate Sutton



The Grand Palais Éphémère. Photo: Paris+ par Art Basel.

CORSETED IN CONSTRUCTION SITES, Paris may be visibly bracing itself for the 2024 Summer Olympics, but there's been another kind of restructuring going on in its art world. While the city has nourished (or indulged) its homegrown scene for decades, the recent arrival of blue-chip transplants like Gagosian, Zwirner, and soon, Hauser & Wirth (which is plotting an Olympic-scaled takeover of a *hôtel particulier*) has ushered in the much-ballyhooed resurgence of the city as an international art hub. More specifically, the continental set see it as an alternative to London in the post-Brexit world (a world still very much rocked by compounding crises. Someone reported seeing an older British couple debating if they should buy Metro tickets in bulk "because of the inflation.") Of course, Paris has had its share of protests—as last week's general strike reminded us—but getting to complain about your cab

wait is maybe part of the fun for some of these people, no? In launching an offshoot in the French capital, Art Basel is not some big fish in a little pond. Paris is a proper reservoir (no matter how provincial some of those FIAC booths could veer). The issue is more that, like when mixing species of goldfish, occasionally you might wake up to find one less pet than you had the day before. This seems to be the case with FIAC, which is still held in a kind of nebulous suspension after losing a court battle over the loss of their venue (the Grand Palais, currently—as with at least half of Paris—under renovation) and its post-Frieze October calendar slot, elements they argued were essential to the fair’s brand.

They aren’t wrong, entirely. FIAC was (is?) a Paris classic. But it was also a quintessentially French fair, catering to quintessentially French needs. The athleisure collab-ready full title of its successor—“Paris+ par Art Basel”—was the result of a complicated negotiation with the municipal authorities to ensure that, even with a new fair, the city retained its pride of place (after all, if we know anything about the French, it’s their aversion to all forms of colonization). There’s no point in asking what Paris brings to the Art Basel; the question is what Art Basel brings to Paris. For many, that answer was short and sweet: VIPs. If the Frieze tent was artificially inflated with a high percentage of hangers-on and influencers of dubious influence, Art Basel’s well-oiled collector machine ensured an on-time delivery of trustee groups and, importantly, The Americans everyone was asking about in London.

In addition to a new CEO (Art Basel veteran Noah Horowitz, who, we learned after the end of Paris+, will succeed outgoing global director Marc Spiegler), the fair also gets a trio of new Paris directors, including general manager Virginie Aubert, deputy director Maxime Hourdequin, and main director Clément Delépine, a curator who cut his teeth at New York’s Swiss Institute before spending the better part of the last decade building from scratch Paris Internationale, a spunky, peripatetic fair that uses its nomadic status to constantly plumb new wells of energy around the capital. As someone who, with his cofounder Silvia Ammon, pulled off a functioning art fair in a car park, a hôtel particulier, and a supermarket, Delépine was uniquely suited to the challenge of staging a full-fledged Art Basel with just nine months and a one-off venue, the Grand Palais Éphémère. The fair also overflowed into its Parcours program, Sites, which stationed the Jardin des Tuileries with commissions by Michael Dean, Otobong Nkanga, and Robert Montgomery. An early favorite was Nina Beier’s Guardians, 2022, which sprinkled birdseed atop a quartet of overturned marble lions, inciting a frenzy among the local pigeons. Briefly. Having reached their fill, the birds abandoned the sculptures for the better part of the afternoon. “We’re learning a lot about the feeding habits of the continental pigeon over here,” Standard (Oslo)’s Eivind Furnesvik deadpanned from his spot by the fountain.

It's been an uneasy time for public monuments, especially for countries built on "borrowed" goods, whose loans are coming due. It was no surprise artists might have something to say on the matter. One of the most visible examples was from Iván Argote's presentation at Centre Pompidou for the Marcel Duchamp Prize—which eventually went to Mimosa Echard for her comely powder-room installation *Escape more*—Argote premiered *Levitate*, a video he had just finished while on residency at Villa Medici in Rome. It saw the artist and his collaborators dressing in the bright orange jumpsuits of municipal workers (as Argote puts it, "we became invisible") and using a trunk-mounted crane to slip a noose around the monument of colonizer-par-excellence Marshal Joseph Gallieni (who literally wrote the book on colonizing). Despite the sculpture's open racism and misogyny—the soldier is held up by four archetypes of women from the far-flung places he conquered—attempts to remove it have been stymied. While the artist only dangled the statue around in midair for a few seconds, footage of the act in progress set off a social media frenzy. Meanwhile, on Tuesday night at *Lafayette Anticipations*, Cyprien Gaillard launched the first of his two-part show (the second would open the following night at Palais de Tokyo, where the artist swept viewers away with one of the most simple and effective uses of the grand hall in a while.) This presentation was anchored around a hulking automaton clock that had quietly menaced the square beside the Centre Pompidou for years before falling into neglect. Gaillard painstakingly restored the dragon-slaying knight and the deep-belly breathing of his prey, with the clock now running backwards in an homage to a lost friend. Surveying the crowds jockeying to catch the clock's movements on camera, a childhood friend of Gaillard's, Pierre Bourgoïn, laughed: "It's so funny, because growing up, we always used to joke about how ugly this sculpture was. But, you know, beautiful in its ugliness."

Wednesday morning saw the opening of *Paris+* in the Grand Palais Éphémère right in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, yet another public sculpture with a checkered reception history. Working my way up the palace's casually phallic floorplan ("Have you looked at the map? I mean, really looked at it?" one collector pressed me later over wine), I couldn't help but be taken by Isabella Bortolozzi, who was showing one of Pierre Klossowski's *Roberte* sculptures. "There's only three of these," Bortolozzi confided. "One's at the Pompidou; one's at the Museum Ludwig. One is here." Karma International dedicated a single nook of their eggplant-colored stand to Simone Fattal, while kaufmann repetto debuted a kind of altar piece by the ever-evolving Nicolas Party. I was charmed by some quieter works—William Wegman's unassuming little oil-on-canvas, *Inside Outside*, 2014, on view at Vallois, and a gorgeous sheath from Bernat Klein at Rodeo—but there were plenty of big bang-booths. Lisson set up a chapel to Yu Hong's *Sirens*, while Buchholz anchored their booth with three large prints by Artforum cover star Wolfgang Tillmans. Jérôme Poggi boldly pitted Edvard Munch's 1911 *Two*

boys on a beach beside a wall-piece by Kapwani Kiwanga, as pride of place at Zwirner went to a small Joan Mitchell beauty, which reportedly went for \$4.5 million in the first hours of the fair. Over in the emerging section, the Rubells put in an early showing, buying out Patrick Goddard's booth at Seventeen and sending "it's really happening!" vibes all down the aisles. A week earlier in London, one of the participating galleries confessed to not knowing some of their French colleagues, but judging by the evidence—Anne Barrault's screening of Liv Schulman, Édouard Montassut's suite of Niklas Taleb photographs, sans titre's selection of Jessy Razafimandimby, and Nile Koetting's disarming installation at Parliament—quality control was not an issue. Don't tell that to Delépine, however. When I finally managed to track him down to congratulate him, I found him eyeing a crumbled-up fair map on the floor. "I'm sorry, I'm a perfectionist, I have to," he apologized, before swooping down to pick it up and spirit it into a trashcan. Despite a visibly successful fair in full swing, the director was all too aware of the challenges he and his team still faced. "When I took this on, it was a question of how to make it different from FIAC, even different from Art Basel, as it would be a mistake to try to replicate Art Basel Basel on a smaller scale. For Paris+ to work, it needs to be its own thing."

As with any fair week, there were a lot of other "own things" clamoring for calendar space, including the emphatically punctuated duo, Zut!, a specialized art and design fair, and Asia NOW, a tightly spaced survey set in the otherwise breathtaking halls of the Monnaie de Paris. But the standout satellite was clearly Paris Internationale, which this year settled in at a stately artist's studio building on Boulevard des Capucines, not far from Opera. Felix Gaudlitz's Tony Cokes installation filled the entryway with B-side Britney Spears tunes, while APalazzo brought a small brigade of Nathalie du Pasquier paintings; Derosia offered some soft-spoken Carlos Reyes wall pieces, and Georg Kargl's booth was blessed by a marvelous Amazon from Jakob Lena Knebl. ("Jesse," Ines Lombardi told me. "Her name is Jesse.") Throughout it all, sunlight filtered luxuriantly through the generous windows. "This was the venue for the first Impressionists exhibition," dealer Lucas Hirsch explained, as I leaned in to admire his Jannis Marwitz miniatures, all already sold out.

It's not just the Eiffel Tower, after all. Paris has no shortage of architectural monuments, and for some, the only chances to tour them are art fairs or fashion shows. Take the Palais d'Iéna, Auguste Perret's magnificent 1937 Art Deco masterpiece—now a favorite of Miuccia Prada. Over the past couple years, curator Matthieu Poirier has filled the gaping halls with trenchant presentations of undervalued geniuses like Artur Lescher and Carlos Cruz-Diez, as well as a survey of suspended abstract sculpture. For this year's outing, Poirier tapped the Brazilian artist Lucia Koch, who swathed the sun-steeped halls with giant curtains, ranging in the color

from hibiscus blossoms to an earthy violet. Over in the nineteenth arrondissement, the always thrilling Espace Niemeyer hosted Audemar Piguet's commission of a new project by Andreas Angelidakis. The building was designed, to much ado, by Oscar Niemeyer in 1971 as the headquarters of the French Communist Party, who to this day continue to own the building—and the hefty obligations of its upkeep as a UNESCO Heritage Site. Now to make ends meet, the party offices have downsized dramatically, renting out the remaining space to commercial ventures and pop-ups (they are one of the few who have yet to scrub Kanye from their website). Inside Niemeyer's dome, the rows of ordered seating had been gutted; in their place Angelidakis's trademark soft modules were arranged around the giant emblem of a priapic column sourced from a Google image search. "I tried to act like an AI," the artist explained over a flute of champagne. "To function, AI boils you down to your basic desires. In my case, that would be naked men and puppies."

If there were puppies, I didn't see them. I did see a lot of curators, including Stuart Comer, Jérôme Sans, Simon Castets, and Den Frie's Anna Weile Kjær, who came with her brother, Esben, who had just finished a performance at the Pompidou that involved stripping firemen and indoor fireworks. (In other words, a proper Parisian aperitif.) When it came time for dinner, guests descended down into a long, serpentine hallway, where an ingeniously undulating table was set for the culinary wonders prepared by chef-to-watch Tom Meyer, who recently inaugurated his first restaurant, Granite, right next to the Louvre. My seatmate, artist Jasmina Cibic, shot her Jarman Award-winning film *The Gift, 2021*, on-site (and consequently was the only dinner guest to have a Wi-Fi connection in the otherwise signal-free bowels of the building). She filled me in on the ins and outs, and introduced me to Nicolas Bescond, our charming Communist landlord. After dinner, several felt the reliable lure of Tolga's Fair Club or the untested possibility of Hangar Y, the latest project from Frédéric Jousset, the collector behind Art Explora. Emerging back up to the surface, however, we discovered a party in full swing upstairs. In Paris, sometimes the party finds you.

Art Explora wasn't the only foundation bringing them in that week. Over at Acacias Art Center, market darling Alexandre Diop had a one-man show, while I heard good things about FIAC-director Jennifer Flay's all-woman exhibition at Fiminco, which shares a space with the Komunuma galleries. At Louis Vuitton, the Mitchell-Monet show was leaving everyone breathless (don't miss Lydia Ourahmane's side commission while you're there) and Anri Sala seemed tailor-made for the Bourse. But if you're going to talk about a rebirth of the scene, it has to happen in the galleries. Even though the nine-month notice of a new fair in town didn't give everyone the chance to retool their programs, there was still plenty to be seen around town. Highlights included a set of thoughtfully constructed photographs by Ivorian artist

François-Xavier Gbré at Cécile Fakhoury; a promising selection of Yukimasa Ida portraits at Mariane Ibrahim; Emeka Ogboh’s new installation at Imane Farès; a charismatic selection of films by Rayane Mcirdi at Anne Barrault; Kamel Mennour’s three-part ode to fin-de-siècle Symbolist Eugène Carrière; “Earthseed,” the Octavia Butler–themed exhibition we always knew White Cube had in them; and a Tavares Strachan exhibition/experience split between Marian Goodman and Perrotin, who filled the rest of his Turenne space with Genesis Belanger and more Iván Argote.

A Belleville staple, now expanded to Rue des Gravilliers, Balice Hertling marked their fifteenth anniversary with a show called “Exhibition N° 120 (maybe),” which was bursting with unexpected contributions from Fattal, Enzo Cucchi, Kayode Ojo, and Reena Spaulings, along with a liting little cat painting by Hongyan that stole the show for me. Friday night, the Italian Daniele Balice and German Alex Hertling gathered friends and collaborators—among them institutional heavyweights Caroline Bourgeois, Rebecca Lamarche-Vadel, Myriam Ben Salah, Sandra Terdjman, Scott Rothkopf, Ruba Katrib, and Alex Gartenfeld, and artists Lydia Ourahmane, Akeem Smith, Xinyi Cheng, and Ser Serpas—at Maison Paul, an old-fashioned French bistro anchoring Place Dauphine. When the hosts (including Hertling’s dog Monroe, who spent the evening gamely nestled at his owner’s feet) seemed reluctant to give a speech, Ben Salah kicked things off for them: “Fifteen years ago Alex and Daniele opened their gallery in a literal closet. In doing so, they have changed the city for good.” To a true Parisian classic!

— Kate Sutton



Dealer Audrey Bossuyt and artist Summer Wheat at **Zidoun & Bossuyt**.