



Culture

## Art Basel 2023: Standouts, Takeaways, and Must-See Galleries

*Cormac Newman* June 16, 2023

**A**rt Basel — the Superbowl of the Art World — is officially on view in Switzerland this Thursday, with the event featuring guided tours of the hottest exhibitions right in the heart of Europe. Founded in the 1970s, the festival was established with the goal of promoting young galleries and artists to the public. Since then, Art Basel has grown from Basel, Switzerland's home turf to include three cities worldwide, each with their own annual festival: Miami, Hong Kong, and, as of 2022, Paris. It's worth noting that each of these cities hosts their festival at different times of the year — on our side of the pond, Miami's Art Basel garners regular media attention during its December opening. In June, however, it's the original Basel, Switzerland affair that takes place. Without further ado, put on your visitor pin and come inside.



If you've been following the art world — even tangentially — you probably have an opinion on NFTs. If you live under a rock and haven't heard, though, you don't need to cram for the test: the galleries at Art Basel indicate that NFTs are out, with [Art Market: Art Basel and UBS Report](#) noting a 49% decline in art-related NFT sales from 2021 to 2022. As a result, the tokens are largely absent from 2023's affair. However, strides in digital art continue to make a mark.

American art dealer Jeffrey Dietch lets the digital paintings of Refik Anadol take centre stage at his booth. The paintings, Dietch told [Artnet](#), are displayed for the “conventional” market, suggesting that the pairing of technology and artwork is no longer a niche arena — regardless of the NFT market's waning success, digital artwork is here to stay.

Other highlights on the digital front include a participative performance work by Croatian artist [Tomo Savić-Gecan](#). The untitled work is a high-tech process: first, it analyzes a randomly-chosen art news story against the Art Basel and UBS Report. The analysis provides data to an AI-generated algorithm. From there, specified lights inside Art Basel change intensities according to the dates, times, and locations set by the algorithm.



Gerhard Richter, *STRIP-TOWER*, 2023

Presented by David Zwirner

Courtesy of Art Basel

Something you can't replicate online? The third dimension (for now). Perhaps that's the reason for the soaring popularity of sculptures at the Swiss show. Gerhard Richter's *STRIP-TOWER* makes the booth of David Zwirner a popular spot for VIPs and visitors alike.

The installation has a storied history: its origins can be traced back to Richter's *STRIPS* series — which itself is comprised of photos from Richter's 1990 *Abstraktes Bild* painting. For the third act in the saga, eight glossy panels shine with seemingly-infinite technicolour stripes. Structurally, the installation resembles a planar field, with all eight panels intersecting. Over three metres high, the sculpture turns the gallery space into its canvas, challenging the separation between an artist's picture plane and everyday world.



Ron Terada, *TL; DR*, 2019 – 2020

Presented by Catriona Jeffries

Courtesy of Art Basel

In recent years, Art Basel's more conceptual offerings have made headlines. If you followed 2019's Miami Beach Art Basel, for instance, you might remember Maurizio Cattelan's *Comedian* — a banana duct-taped to the wall, which sold for a six-figure sum and promptly threw at least half of the internet into a rage. While there were no bananas in Ron Terada's *TL; DR*, the piece is an equally riveting, conceptual investigation of evolving standards.

While *Comedian* interrogated the modern definition of artwork, Terada's piece explores the contemporary technological explosion through lens of the always-breaking news cycle. The piece speaks to the claustrophobic effect of constant information. Painting each headline in the same formal font, *TL; DR* creates an intentional lack of focus.



Serge Attukwei Clottey, *Sea Never Dries*, 2022

Presented by Simon Lee Gallery

Courtesy of Art Basel

A massive, hanging installation titled *Sea Never Dries*, by Ghanian artist Serge Attukwei Clottey finishes off our roundup. The dazzling yellow art piece is constructed from found objects from Clottey's hometown, a process the artist dubbed "Afragallionism." Boasting dramatic curves and shimmering highlights, the installation repositions everyday materials as high art, inspiring viewers to view their recycling in a new light — a trend that we'll surely see more of as sustainability takes off.

Hungry for more? Don't scroll away just yet — Art Basel has prepared four virtual viewings for those of us who can't make the Trans-Atlantic trek. Check out the shows, along with several gallery profiles, [here](#).