ART BASEL 2024: A CANVAS OF BOUNDLESS CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

The 54th Edition of Art Basel 2024 remains the touchpoint for the international art market, offering the broadest overview of contemporary art. This global event not only highlights cutting-edge artworks but also underscores Art Basel's role as a vital nexus for artistic innovation and cultural exchange. This ultimate tour de force invites the art world to a prestigious gathering in the heart of Basel, Switzerland, showcasing 285 leading galleries from 40 countries and territories. Held at the iconic Messe Basel, this year's edition unfolds from June 13th to 16th, preceded by VIP preview days on June 11th and 12th.

Chiharu Shiota, *The Extended Line*, 2021-2024

Image courtesy: Chiharu Shiota and Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

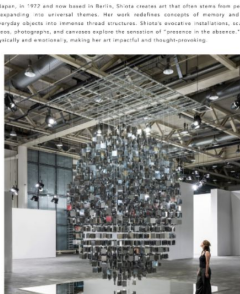
The fair spans multiple sectors across the expansive convention centre, with the dynamic Unlimited sector housed in Hall 1 and other prominent sections like Galleries, Feature, and Statements in nearby Hall 2. Parcours transforms the surrounding Claraplatz with site-specific installations, while film screenings take place at the esteemed Stadtkino Basel. Art Basel's Unlimited 2024 is a unique sector dedicated to large-scale projects, providing a platform for monumental installations, colossal sculptures, boundless wall paintings, comprehensive photo series, and expansive video projections.

Some of the awe-inspiring presentations that need a special mention were from the following artists:

1. Tony Matelli, *Weed* (OMR)

This year marks the 23rd participation of Mexico City's renowned gallery OMR at Art Basel. Celebrated for its ambassadorial role in the Mexican art scene, OMR's booth exemplifies its dedication to fostering dialogue between international and Mexican artists. OMR returns to Art Basel Switzerland with a selection of works from 15 artists, exploring the interplay between natural and artificial elements and reinterpreting diverse historical and cultural contexts.

The gallery's booth at Art Basel features works that connect with the natural world, such as Tony Matelli's "Weeds" (2024), painted bronze sculptures resembling plants growing through walls. Weeds are markers along the paths of culture, representing both cultivation and its failure. Their sculptural representation carries an ambiguous social and political charge. Transformed through concept, process, multiplication, and representation, Matelli's weeds are vessels of indeterminate meaning, open to various interpretations. They seem to be one thing, yet mean something else altogether. As object-metaphors, they stand in for elusive truths, embodying both triumph and failure. Weeds persevere; they cannot be eradicated. They are a celebration of unwantedness.



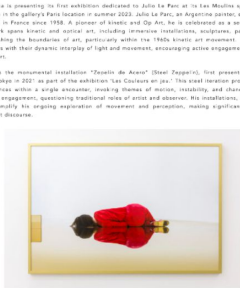
Tony Matelli, *Weed*, 2024

Image courtesy: Tony Matelli

2. Chihara Shiota, *The Extended Line* (Templon Gallery)

Galeria Templon has represented a diverse roster of contemporary artists, including both French and international talents. Established at just 21 years old, Templon quickly gained recognition for his avant-garde exhibitions and commitment to innovative artworks across various media. At Art Basel's Unlimited sector, which features monumental artworks curated by Giovanni Carmine, Chiharu Shiota's installation "The Extended Line" was a standout, earning second place in the public vote. This 16 × 9 metre, red-hued rope and paper installation reflects Shiota's personal experience as a cancer survivor and explores themes of life, death, and relationships. The piece features hundreds of kilometres of red ropes holding replicas of Shiota's body parts, embodying her exploration of life lines and linearity.

Born in Osaka, Japan, in 1972 and now based in Berlin, Shiota creates art that often stems from personal experiences and emotions, expanding into universal themes. Her work redefines concepts of memory and consciousness by incorporating everyday objects into immense thread structures. Shiota's evocative installations, sculptures, drawings, performance videos, photographs, and canvases explore the sensation of "presence in the absence." Her work engages viewers both physically and emotionally, making her art impactful and thought-provoking.



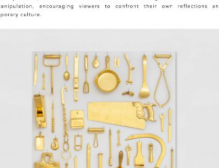
Julio Le Parc, *Zepelin de Acero*, 2021

Image courtesy: Julio Le Parc and GALLERIA CONTINUA

3. Julio Le Parc, *Zepelin de Acero* (Galleria Continua)

Galleria Continua is presenting its first exhibition dedicated to Julio Le Parc at its Les Moulins space, following an initial exhibition in the gallery's Paris location in summer 2023. Julio Le Parc, an Argentine painter, sculptor, and visual artist, has lived in France since 1958. A pioneer of kinetic and Op Art, he is celebrated as a seminal figure in art history. His work spans kinetic and optical art, including immersive installations, sculptures, paintings, and light projections, pushing the boundaries of art, particularly within the 1960s kinetic art movement. Le Parc's artworks captivate viewers with their dynamic interplay of light and movement, encouraging active engagement and challenging perceptions of art.

The highlight is the monumental installation "Zepelin de Acero" (Steel Zeppelin), first presented at the Hermès Foundation in Tokyo in 2021 as part of the exhibition "Les Couleurs en jeu." This vivid iteration prompts reflection on diverse experiences within a single encounter, invoking themes of motion, instability, and chance. Le Parc's work fosters dynamic engagement, questioning traditional roles of artist and observer. His installations, including "Zepelin de Acero," exemplify his ongoing exploration of movement and perception, making significant contributions to contemporary art discourse.



Maria Hassabi, *Mirrors*, 2024

Image courtesy: Maria Hassabi

4. Maria Hassabi, *Mirrors* (The Breeder Gallery)

The Breeder gallery, from the last 22 years, has been fostering an artistic dialogue between Athens and the global art community. The gallery is dedicated to supporting artists of all nationalities, genders, colours, and religions, serving as a platform for politically and socially radical art.

At this year's Basel, The Breeder is showcasing the work of Maria Hassabi titled "Mirrors". It uses golden acrylic mirrors to distort photographic images of dancers, prompting viewers to reflect on the manipulation of perception in today's media-saturated world. It is a continuation of her immersive performative installation "I'll Be Your Mirror," originally shown at Tai Kwun Contemporary in Hong Kong in 2023. The nine photographs in "Mirrors" merge in a large frame of golden acrylic mirrors, portraying distorted figures that reflect dancers' movements, abstracting the body beyond what the naked eye can perceive. This work comments on the global media environment flooded with misinformation and manipulation, encouraging viewers to confront their own reflections and consider image manipulation in contemporary culture.

Ugo Rondinone, *Alphabet of my Mothers and Fathers II*, 2024

Image courtesy: Ugo Rondinone

5. Ugo Rondinone, *Alphabet of my Mothers and Fathers* (Father Schipper booth)

The Fetter Schipper Art Gallery, since its inception in 1989, has been at the forefront when it comes to exhibiting experimental works that challenge traditional boundaries. They explore new territories, initiate significant conceptual departures, and introduce new bodies of work. At Art Basel, the gallery showcased a standout booth featuring Ugo Rondinone's evocative presentation, "Alphabet of my Mothers and Fathers." This semi-autobiographical work is dedicated to Rondinone's Italian parents who, in the early 1960s, immigrated to Switzerland, seeking better living conditions and economic opportunities.

He delves into the themes of identity and cultural heritage by moulding everyday objects into gold-leafed artworks. His set of 15 gold leaf artworks includes pre-industrial handmade farming implements and various kitchen and household tools, elevated from the everyday ordinary and transported to "extraordinary" by creating a dazzling effect.

Each of these singular demonstrations at Art Basel's Unlimited 2024 underscore the boundless creativity and progressive spirit shaping today's art world. These exhibits not only showcase diversity and innovation but also challenge deep-rooted conventions with their monumental and thought-provoking works.

Text by Shalini Passi

Image Courtesy: Chiharu Shiota, Sebastiano Pellion di Persano, TEMPLON, Paris, Tony Matelli, Julio Le Parc, GALLERIA CONTINUA, Maria Hassabi, and Ugo Rondinone.

Find out more about Art Basel 2024 here: https://www.artbasel.com/basel