

# INDULGE



THE WOMEN'S FASHION ISSUE

# ART and CIRCUMSTANCE

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**A**rt Basel is the international contemporary art exhibition held each year in Basel, Switzerland since its inception in 1970. Considered to be the world's premier international art show for Modern and contemporary works, Art Basel features nearly 300 leading galleries from North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

More than 2,500 artists, ranging from the great masters of Modern art to the latest generation of emerging stars, are represented in the show's multiple sections. Works on view include the highest-quality paintings, sculptures, drawings, installations, photography, video and editioned works from the most important fine art dealers worldwide.

61,000 people attended Art Basel in 2009, including art collectors, art dealers, artists, curators and other art enthusiasts. Whether or not this year's fair, being held June 16 - 20, will

bring the same numbers is unclear, but vendors and collectors alike, remain hopeful.

Located on the banks of the Rhine, at the border between Switzerland, France and Germany, Basel offers world-class museums, outdoor sculptures, theaters, concert halls, idyllic medieval old town and new buildings by leading architects. Basel is ranked as a culture capital, and that cultural richness helps put the Art Basel week on the agenda for art lovers from all over the globe.

**DAY ONE:** The beginning of the fair actually starts the Monday prior to Tuesday's official Vernissage, with the VIP opening of Art Unlimited. For the past 10 years, Art Unlimited is Art Basel's answer to providing an exhibition platform for projects that transcend the classical art-show stand - including video projections, large-scale installations, massive sculptures and live performances.



The opening is characteristically energetic, with everyone greeting each other as if for the first time, comparing notes on travel schedule, various degrees of jet lag, what the state of their hotel is in, and the difficulty in navigating the Swiss style of business.

The past years have had various degrees of critical success in terms of the quality of the work shown; this year may yet prove that this exhibition program model may have extended beyond its relevance.

With far fewer large scale productions and the predominance of video installations, it can feel more like a critic on the current economic situation, with less money for large-scale productions, than a statement of the political or social relevance of the work itself.

Art Statements, a smaller side venue within Unlimited, provides a unique venue for those seeking emerging artists, featuring one-person stands from rising galleries worldwide.

**DAY TWO:** This is when the real frenzy begins! This entire day is reserved for the most exclusive of invited guests, allowing the first priority access at noon. It is a mad rush of some of the most powerful figures, jockeying for position to enter as soon as the doors.

While it is well known that many works are sold before the fair, it is still critical to arrive early to be the first to find the works that have not been scooped away, and this could mean the difference in minutes if a collector gets to the booth before you.

A second VIP level entry begins at 3pm – which means, of course, significant artworks, have been previewed and sold in the prior three hour window. The final entry level is from 7pm-9pm for the official Vernissage. For those who have the energy, this sets off the social maelstrom of the week. Here the day's scoops, purchases and frustrations are discussed and feted during the remainder of the evening.

**DAY THREE:** For those who did not spend eight hours at the fair on Tuesday, or who focused on either priority purchases or priority socializing, will spend the majority of this day seeing anything and everything possible. This type of mentality and transactions, will continue until the close of the fair on Sunday.

While the art market has not been immune to the global economic crisis, it is apparent that this is beginning to shift. Auction records have continued to be set and the general feeling at Art Basel among most dealers was that the opening will be a success with many sales on the books, but far from the sell-out conditions which were common in the more recent years. If you are a true collector, with limited time and energy to spend either going to galleries or the multiple fairs worldwide, Art Basel is the one place that you should not miss. It is the best of the best and an experience that words alone can not describe alone. *(Contributions from www.artbasel.com)*