

Art Basel Paris Is Finally Here. Will It Upend the Global Art-Fair Order?

After flirting for years, Art Basel Paris is officially upon us. What does it mean for the future of fair-dom? Plus: updates on a Diddy-collection mystery, a Warhol *Marilyn* whodunit, and more in this week's column.



BY NATE FREEMAN

OCTOBER 18, 2024



PAINTING: RASHID JOHNSON/PHOTO BY STEPHANIE POWELL; SCULPTURE: CARSTON HÖLLER/PHOTO BY TIMOTHÉE VIALE; ALL OTHERS FROM GETTY IMAGES.

The first sign something unusual was going down at the Grand Palais in Paris was the small wooden house, plopped on the steps of the 150-foot-tall Beaux Arts dome. Things got stranger. The home was actually constructed in a matter of days, and it was no simple abode, but one of the demountable structures designed by Jean Prouvé that exists in the space between conceptual art, modern design, and a thing you can literally move into. The dealer **Patrick Seguin** was selling it for \$2 million, which isn't even that outrageous for a Prouvé house. **André Balazs** bought one in 2007 for just about \$5 million. But it's still a bit unreal to walk up to Art Basel Paris at the newly restored Grand Palais and be confronted with an austere Prouvé that was constructed overnight.

And then out of the house stepped **Owen Wilson**.

Why was the artist-loving actor in the City of Light, hanging out in a seven-figure design-object-slash-art-domicile? Well that's just the magic of Art Basel Paris. Even before stepping foot inside the main event—the global fair company's first edition at its permanent home in the Grand Palais, the fulcrum point of a week that is now a vital part of the collecting-as-lifestyle global tour—there are celebrities doing art stuff.

At this moment, in this town, an art fair really seems to be seeping into the mainstream. Art Basel ads blanket the Métro stops on Line 1. Multiple Uber drivers googled “art basel paris tickets” on their phones while driving—eyes on the road, mon frere! All week, the city's cultural offerings seemed logjammed and bustling, as if the surge in tourists never receded after the Olympics. In fact, a Paris resident told me that October in Paris is actually *more* crowded than it was during the summer games, when many Parisians retreated. Now everyone's back and the art tourists are here too.

It was so crowded on Sunday afternoon that **Larry Gagosian** and **David Zwirner** coincidentally ended up at the same tiny room for lunch: Bar Vendôme, the posh spot nested inside the warren of luxury that is the Ritz Paris. A cold war went

down while each party pretended the other wasn't there. It was so crowded that, the following night, Zwirner actually teamed with a third mega-gallery, Hauser & Wirth, to do a joint dinner at Loulou to avoid making their clients choose between bashes. Both global powers have outposts in Paris, of course. The French capital has risen as a gallery hub in the years after Brexit and all of the foreigners who planted flags here. And it was so crowded that they all opened on the same night, Monday. Gagosian offered a **Harold Ancart** show of gigantic landscape paintings, Zwirner new paintings by **Dana Schutz**, and Hauser & Wirth paintings, sculpture, and video by **Rashid Johnson**. The latter was the most in-demand show in town, according to private dealers trying to get their hands on some for clients.

Subscribe to True
Colors, Nate
Freeman's art-world
dispatch. →

