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EXPANSION PLANS:
Progress for
Kunstmuseum
Basel, setback for
Kunsthaus Zürich
ANALYSIS
PAGE 4



MANIFESTA:
It's about the art,
not just politics,
says curator
Kasper König
INTERVIEW
PAGE 6



SUPERSTARS:
The contemporary
art market has
created a new class
of millionaires
FEATURE
PAGES 9-10

PLUS
PREVIEWS AND
LISTINGS
of fairs and
exhibitions in Basel
and beyond

A century of the readymade

Duchamp's influence is in evidence at the fair, but can today's artists reimagine his idea?

TRENDS

Basel. One hundred years after Marcel Duchamp invented the readymade, his influence reverberates around Art Basel. Overt references include the late Elaine Sturtevant's *Duchamp Porte Boutelles*, 1993, suspended from the ceiling at Galerie Hans Mayer (2.0/E8). The work, which sold to a private collector for €60,000, is a replica of, and homage to,

for exhibition to the Society of Independent Artists in New York. Isaacs's rainbow-coloured ceramic, priced at €34,000, "is about Duchamp's legacy and also an ironic breaking with that", says Erika Költzsch, a director of Galerie Michael Haas (2.0/D5).

There is also a Duchampian flair to work by the late French artist Philippe Thomas, who set up a public relations firm called Readymades Belong to Everyone in New York's Cable Gallery in the

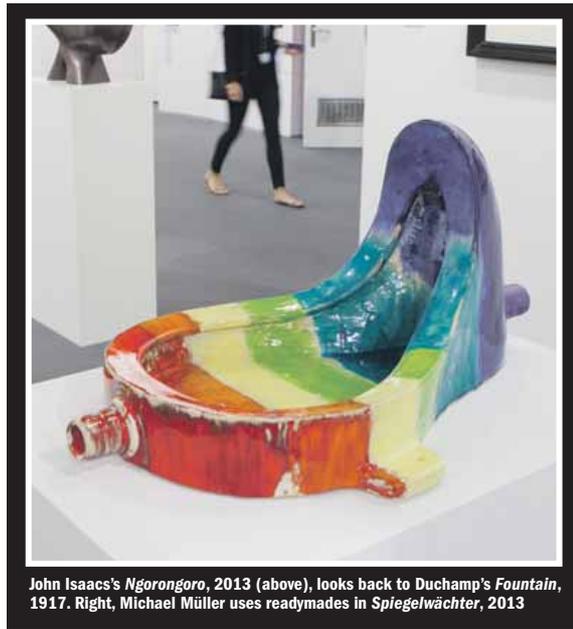
"Art itself has become a readymade. Marina Abramovic in front of Jay-Z becomes a readymade"

Duchamp's first pure readymade, *Bottle Dryer*, 1914, which the artist bought from a Parisian department store.

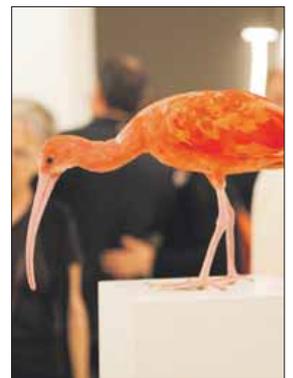
John Isaacs's *Ngorongoro*, 2013, quotes Duchamp's famous *Fountain*, 1917 – a urinal turned on its side, placed on a pedestal, signed by the fictional R. Mutt and submitted (unsuccessfully)

late 1980s and took photographs that collectors signed. In so doing, the buyer became the work's author – so *Insight*, 1989, available for €36,000 with Jan Mot (2.1/H10), is listed as a work by its first owner, Jay Chiat.

"Which artist could say he's not influenced by Duchamp? It's almost



John Isaacs's *Ngorongoro*, 2013 (above), looks back to Duchamp's *Fountain*, 1917. Right, Michael Müller uses readymades in *Spiegelwächter*, 2013



has become an icon," says Thomas Girst, the head of cultural engagement for the BMW Group and the author of *The Duchamp Dictionary*. "Whatever the readymade stood for during Duchamp's time, and for Duchamp, is no longer of any value."

Instead, artists must engage with the readymade in new ways. Ai Weiwei is "someone who uses the charged object in a new sociopolitical context", says Max Hollein, the director of the Städel Museum, Frankfurt. Lisson Gallery (2.0/B12) has sold two editions of Ai's *Forever*, 2013, which uses bicycles bought from the manufacturer, for €100,000 each to private European collections.

According to the art adviser Todd Levin of the Levin Art Group, the artist Cyprien Gaillard chooses objects "because they exist precisely as they are found in the world and yet still manage to constructively engage the concept of degeneration that is so central to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

impossible," says the artist Michael Müller, whose 25-year project to translate Robert Musil's novel *The Man Without Qualities* into an invented language incorporates readymades such as the bright scarlet ibis bird in *Spiegelwächter*, 2013, on sale for €12,500 with Galerie Thomas Schulte (2.1/K7).

The dangers of Duchamp

Such ubiquity can be problematic. "Duchamp has become a synonym for the idea that anything goes, that you

can do anything and call it art. This is a misunderstanding of Duchamp's readymades," argues the critic Calvin Tomkins in his biography of the artist. "You could say that Duchamp has been an enormously destructive influence. But he never tried to be an influence. He was working things out for himself, and the fact that so many people have taken his example as an excuse not to make the necessary mental effort is a perversion of what Duchamp was all about."

"What was an iconoclastic gesture

Warhol tops fair's big-ticket sales

Basel. Sales seem to be going swimmingly for some galleries at Art Basel – one early deal was for Jeff Koons's *Dolphin*, 2007-13, which sold for \$5m at David Zwirner (2.0/F5). Midway through the fair, however, others were waiting to close sales on the bigger-ticket items; Picasso's *Femme assise dans un fauteuil*, 1941, remained unsold at Marlborough Fine Art (2.0/D8) on Thursday, but the gallery's Alexander Platon said that "people are making the right noises". Despite some dealers playing the waiting game, and the challenge of

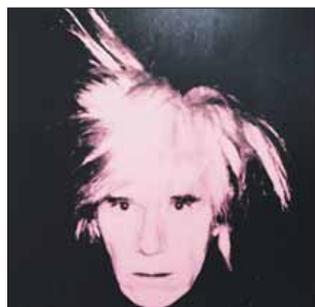
wresting the top-end works away from auction, there were other sales in the seven- and even eight-figure range:

- Warhol, *Self-Portrait (Fright Wig)*, 1986, around \$35m (Skarstedt, 2.0/E14)
- Ad Reinhardt, *Blue Painting*, 1951-53, around \$10m (David Zwirner, 2.0/F5; price unconfirmed)

- Damien Hirst, *Nothing is a Problem for Me*, 1992, around \$6m (White Cube, 2.0/C18)
- Günther Uecker, *Weisse Bilder (White Pictures)*, 1989-92, more than \$5m (Dominique Lévy, 2.0/F4)
- Lucio Fontana, *Concetto Spaziale*, 1960, \$4.7m (Galerie Karsten Greve, 2.0/E1)
- Fernand Léger, *Les Deux Soeurs*, 1932, \$3m (Van de Weghe Fine Art, 2.0/D7)
- Jean-Paul Riopelle, *Ombre d'Espace*, 1954, \$2m (Edward Tyler Nahem, 2.0/F8)



Melanie Gertis



Works by Warhol, Fontana and Koons sold in the seven- and eight-figure range

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ANISH KAPOOR *Untitled*, 2008 (detail)

NEWS

Performance: do you buy it?

The public is warming to the medium, but collectors remain cool

ANALYSIS

Basel. While some visitors spent the first public day of Art Basel admiring multi-million-dollar paintings, others strayed from the main fair to watch a nude woman examine her body with a hand mirror and a war veteran stand silently in a corner. These performance works, by the artists Joan Jonas and Santiago Sierra respectively, are part of "14 Rooms", a show of live installations at Messe Basel (until 22 June). The project is part of a wider effort to raise the public's awareness of performance art.

"Performance is reaching a broader public now," says Hans Ulrich Obrist, the co-director of the Serpentine Galleries in London, who co-organised "14 Rooms" with Klaus Biesenbach, the director of MoMA PS1 in Queens, New York. "The internet age has made the need for live experiences more urgent."

In New York, the Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson has hired musicians to play in the New Museum for the duration of his show (until 29 June). In London, visitors are queuing for hours to catch a glimpse of Marina Abramovic, who is holding court at the Serpentine for her exhibition "512 Hours" (until 25

"It almost becomes a form of patronage, more than a purchase"

August). In October, Frieze Art Fair is due to launch a new section devoted to interactive works.

Although the public may be warming to performance art, collectors remain cool. Only a few private individuals and major institutions, such as the Tate in London, the Centre Pompidou in Paris and New York's Museum of Modern Art are buying live performance. The works



The Dutch artist, composer, film-maker and triathlete Guido van der Werve's first solo museum show in the US is due to open at Nashville's Frist Center for the Visual Arts in 2015. Werve tells *The Art Newspaper* that he has started a new piece, which will be a "counterpoint" to *home, a requiem, 2011-12*, performed in Basel this week. The athletic performance artist warmed up for the *Parcours Night concert on Thursday by swimming in the Rhine and jogging to the Clarakirche. A classically trained musician, he played the piano, still wearing a wetsuit, accompanied by a 20-piece string orchestra and 28-strong choir. Nummer veertien, home, 2012, another romantic absurdist work, is presented by Luhning Augustine (2.0/E13) and Marc Foxx Gallery (2.1/R9) in Unlimited (U77). For the 54-minute film, Van der Werve swam, cycled and ran from the Warsaw church where Chopin's heart is interred to the composer's grave in Paris. J.P.*

are typically sold as a set of instructions that are logistically and conceptually demanding to stage and nearly impossible to resell. "It almost becomes a form of patronage, more than a purchase," says Catherine Wood, a curator of performance art at the Tate.

At the fair, a private collector bought *Justified Beliefs*, 2014, an interactive work by Christian Falsnaes, from Berlin's PSM gallery (2.1/S5) for €18,000. The five-channel audio installation invites visitors

to put on headphones and join two performers in following the artist's instructions, which include cheering and stripping naked. But this type of acquisition remains rare. "It is hard to work out how to make performance collectible," says Laura Chiari, a director at Rome's Galleria Lorcan O'Neill (2.1/R7), which has devoted its stand to the Italian performance artist Luigi Ontani.

Some galleries have found success in presenting videos and photographs

of performances. New York's Sean Kelly gallery (2.1/N2) sold several editions of *Places of Power, Waterfall*, 2013, a photograph by Marina Abramovic, for €80,000 each, while Madrid's Helga de Alvear (2.1/M8) sold two photographs of performances by Santiago Sierra for \$6,000 each. But not everyone believes that performance art should be commodified. "I feel as if the 'value' of performance art is in the 'you had to be there' factor," says the art adviser Liz Parks. "The documentation of a performance presents a somewhat diffused version of the original, in-the-moment electricity."

Some collectors say they do not distinguish between performance and other media, despite its unique challenges. "If it's a great piece, it's a great piece," says the Greek collector Dakis Joannou. To stage Tino Sehgal's *This is Propaganda*, 2002, Joannou must hire an actor to sing every time someone enters the room. "If you are buying a five-ton Richard Serra sculpture, you need to hire movers to install it. What's the difference?" he asks.

For now, collecting performance art remains driven by passion rather than a practical desire for investment. "You're buying a relationship with the artist," says RoseLee Goldberg, the founder of the performance art biennial Performa. But some suspect that the market will eventually catch up. As the artist Christian Falsnaes said in a recent interview: "In post-industrial capitalism, there is a market for everything." Julia Halperin

A century of the readymade

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

his practice". An industrial digger is the major component of Gaillard's *Cozumel Thrasher*, 2013, which sold at Sprüth Magers (2.0/B19) for €150,000.

The video artist Christian Marclay interacts with the readymade in a distinct way—specifically in *The Clock*, 2010, but also in earlier works such as *Shake Rattle and Roll (Fluxmix)*, 2004, which is on show with Paula Cooper Gallery (2.0/E5) in Unlimited (Hall 1 Süd/U71).

Other artists reimagining the readymade include Mathieu Mercier, whose *Untitled (work in progress)*, 2013, is available for €88,000 with Mehdi Chouakri (2.1/N17), and Kader Attia, whose *Repair, Culture's agency #7*, 2014, is at Galleria Continua (2.1/M20), priced at €95,000. *Untitled (Bottles, Horse, Heads)*, 1989, by Haim Steinbach, the subject of a show at the Kunsthalle Zürich (until 17 August), sold for €85,000 at White Cube (2.0/C18).

Museums are ready

Artists are not the only ones grappling with the legacy of Duchamp's ready-



Sturtevant's homage to Duchamp

mades. New York's Museum of Modern Art is said to be planning an exhibition in 2016, while "The Readymade Century: 1916-2016" is due to open in 2016 at the Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, and the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin. A show of Duchamp's editioned readymades is due to open at Gagosian Gallery in New York this month (26 June-8 August).

Perhaps the impact of the readymade

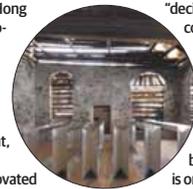
is more profound than even Duchamp could have imagined. "Art itself has become a readymade. It doesn't matter what art it is—you can plug it in and create a certain cultural atmosphere," Max Hollein says. "Marina Abramovic in front of Jay-Z at his concert in an art gallery becomes a readymade; Yayoi Kusama working for the storefronts of Louis Vuitton; the simulation of works of art as the backdrop to a Karl Lagerfeld Chanel fashion show. Art loses its original intention and becomes a simulacrum."

Hollein says: "One hundred years ago, the white cube was the framework that absorbed anything and transformed it into art. Now art itself is made use of for different purposes than its original conception. The positive is that this is a symbol of the popularity of art, especially contemporary art. The problematic element is that the powers now surrounding art in fashion, luxury, advertising and so on communicate an environment in which art could be conceived solely as an aesthetic or social foil." Charlotte Burns

In brief

Swiss space for Pace

Pace gallery (2.0/B20), which has permanent spaces in London, New York, Hong Kong and Beijing, and a temporary one in Menlo Park, California, recently opened another temporary space in Zuoz in eastern Switzerland. The gallery is in a historic house called Chesa Büsin (right, with *Untitled* by Donald Judd, 1978-79), which has been renovated to create an underground gallery with two outdoor spaces. "Many collectors have beautiful houses and spend a significant amount of time in this part of Switzerland. Pace Chesa Büsin offers the right platform to service them now," says Mollie Dent-Brocklehurst, the president of Pace London. A retrospective of the Chinese artist Zhang Huan is due to open on 14 July (until 31 August). G.H.



tions, has lost its principal sponsor. After funding the institution for 23 years, the private investment firm Schörrghuber Group has "decided to refocus its philanthropic commitment, to devote itself more to promoting social projects in the future". The museum, which is led by Okwui Enwezor, will lose €500,000—11% of its annual budget. A major show of works by the US artist Matthew Barney is on show (until 17 August). J.Mi.

Not just window dressing

The Chinese artist Zhao Yao will create the window display at Galeries Lafayette, the high-end Parisian department store, this summer. The project is supported by Adrian Cheng, the Hong Kong-based property developer and the founder of the K11 Art Foundation, the Fondation Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent and the Palais de Tokyo. "This is a step towards the world hearing the unheard voices of China's contemporary artists," says Cheng, who is visiting Art Basel this week. M.G.

Munich museum loses chief sponsor

The Haus der Kunst in Munich, one of Germany's leading contemporary art institu-

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