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Art Basel Festivities Begin With Liste, the Town's Young Fair

Nate Freeman
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Upon arriving in Basel after [a weekend of gallery-going in Zurich](#), I saw an image on the Messeplatz that reminded me of the vibe at Liste, the satellite fair here that focuses on smaller galleries showing mostly up-and-coming artists. The vision on the Messeplatz wasn't a *work*, really: on the side of a truck full of Feldschlösschen, a Rhineland beer, it was an image of three Swiss dudes grilling out beside a lake, bratwurst sizzling on the fire, beers in hand, looking youthful, content, and utterly immune from the problems in the world.

That was pretty much the scene here at the opening of Liste, which for more than two decades has taken over a former schoolhouse that towers up five floors, booths stuffed into the odd nooks where children once were brought up in the Swiss tradition. The kids have now grown up, but just a little: Beers flowed before noon, and there were indeed sausages on the grill as you entered through a courtyard streamed through with cigarette smoke.

There were also 70 galleries with work by 140 artists, all for sale at price tags far more modest than those set to be affixed to work at Art Basel starting tomorrow. Sales were slim in the opening minutes, but none were too concerned—there's a long week ahead, plenty of time to sell out a booth and then some. The David Lewis booth had new work by Greg Parma Smith, including *Sulphur-crested Cockatoo with Radiance* (2017), which is indeed a radiant cockatoo crested with plastic trinkets.

"It's sort of a cosmic circle around it—it's very earnest," Lewis said.



Greg Parma Smith at David Lewis.
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The work is \$28,000, and there's also a luminous purple tapestry by Jared Madere for \$10,000—he's been making them while living in India the past few months. Upstairs at Berlin's Project Native Informant, which made great use of the slated tarp-covered space tucked into the side of the building, there were some charming small paintings of computers by Morag Keil and new work by Juliana Huxtable. Bridget Donahue brought work by John Russell, the British artist who was in the Bank collective and, at Liste, is showing a gigantic backlit banner that Donahue had to build out in the space.

"This is the smallest of these that he's ever done, actually," Donahue said of the work, *These were Insects that Were their Eyes* (2017), which is \$18,000. "The one in the gallery is 60 feet long."

Clearing gallery was occupying its normal walled-off space, which this year was used to display a solo show of work by Zak Kitnick. As I walked in, owner Olivier Baban was talking to Don and Mera Rubell, explaining to them that the show was about

"communication and modernity." On the wall were sculptures meant to evoke code, or the screen of a smart phone, and they were next to a string of empty Campbell's soup cans (Warhol, sure, but also the way next door neighbors would talk to each other from windows in the old days, with a tin can telephone) next to a red rotary phone placed in the middle on a pedestal like a religious object.

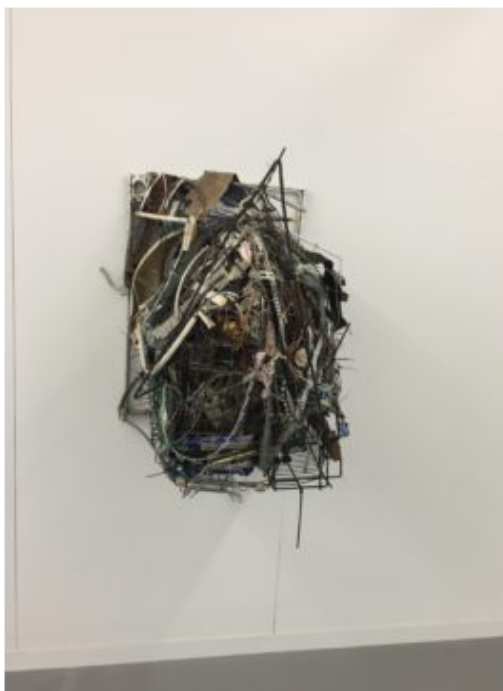
As for trends, it was clear that we're dealing in painting and sculpture here, though Arcadia Missa brought five videos by five different video artists. Admittedly, director Rózsa Farkas said the arrangement came about because "most of our artists are video artists." And maybe it's out of sheer homesickness, having been on the move these past few weeks, but it seemed like there were an awful lot of Europe-based galleries offering their booths to young New York-based artists. Cologne's Galerie Jan Kaps had a solo show of work by Violet Dennison, Paris's High Art had new work by Bradley Kronz, Société had new "selfie-portrait" works on canvas by Ned Vena, and Dublin's Ellis King is showing a new suite of paintings by Joseph Geagan along with some creepy sculptures of figurines on disco balls.



“We did a show with him in January, but I’m excited to bring it here to Basel and have the crowds here get wrapped up in it,” said director Jonathan Ellis King, who noted that the paintings were on sale for \$8,000 each.

John Russell at Bridget Donahue.
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As with each year, there was a certain amount of turnover, with the galleries who graduate to emerging sectors of Basel allowing for new galleries to sneak into Liste—this year welcomed 14 newcomers, including Bianca D’Alessandro from Copenhagen, Jenny’s from Los Angeles, Madragoa from Lisbon, Southard Reid from London, and New York’s Lomex, which is housed in Eva Hesse’s old studio on the Bowery.



Robert Bittenbender at Lomex.
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“It’s my first fair at all, actually,” said Lomex director Alexander Shulan, standing in front of work by Robert Bittenbender and Valerie Keane, which ranged from \$7,000 to 9,000. “I didn’t want to do any fairs really, but I wanted to do this because of the history. Valerie, Robert, and I planned this from months out and made all new work for it—so, really, it’s a show.”

Another new gallery is Weiss Falk, which was showing work by Timothée Calame—the artist’s show at the Swiss Institute’s temporary space in New York’s Tribeca neighborhood just closed yesterday. Weiss Falk also may have set the record for the shortest commute time to Liste: While some galleries traveled thousands of miles to show at the Art Basel’s little brother, Weiss Falk’s brick-and-mortar space is actually *in* Basel, just a seven-minute walk away.

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