

\$148 Million in Two Days. Then Paris Pulled the Plug.

Art Basel Paris 2026: a week of record-breaking sales, unexpected disruption and a city-wide conversation that extended far beyond the fair.

[ELIZA KURAZOVA](#)

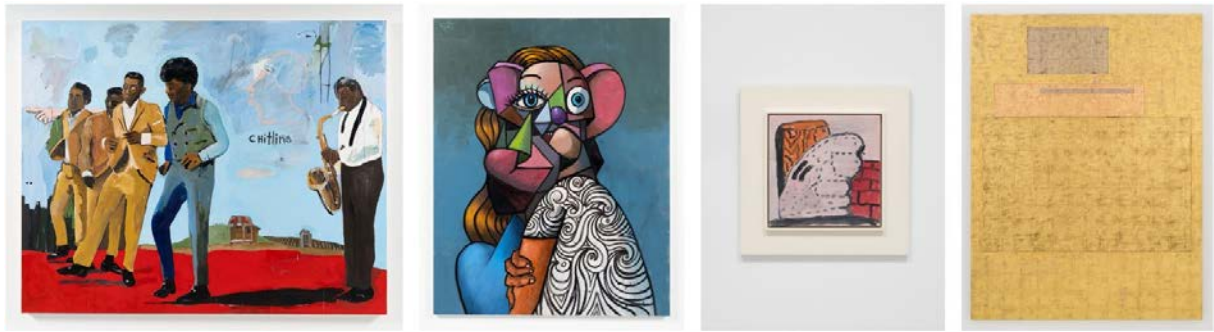
Welcome back, Art Enthusiasts,

Art Basel Paris had barely reached the midpoint of its programme when the week took an unexpected turn. On Thursday, 22 October, organisers announced that the fair would close at 7pm the following evening, two days earlier than scheduled, amid concerns over planned demonstrations across Paris. The decision, made with the safety of visitors, exhibitors, staff, partners and artworks in mind, brought the fair's weekend programme to an early end. For a city hosting thousands of international visitors, it was a reminder that even the most carefully orchestrated cultural calendar remains connected to the realities beyond its doors.

The announcement came against a striking commercial backdrop. During the first two days, galleries reported 306 sales, totaling approximately \$148 million, according to figures compiled from gallery sales reports. Six works reportedly sold for more than \$5 million each, compared with four reported across the entire previous edition. Hauser & Wirth placed paintings by Gerhard Richter and Georg Baselitz at approximately \$10 million apiece, while other galleries reported major transactions across modern and contemporary art. The figures confirmed the fair's ability to draw collectors prepared to make significant acquisitions, even in a climate of wider uncertainty.

On Tuesday evening, **Marc Payot, President of Hauser & Wirth**, stated:

“Contrary to conventional wisdom, presenting one’s most important works at an art fair is considered too risky. Yet we are challenging conventions, because that is precisely what the artists and collectors who truly define their time and make history do. We consider Frieze London and Art Basel Paris one extended season dedicated to the sale of masterpieces. This momentum extends well beyond the final day of the last fair. In the past 24 hours, we have sold exceptionally rare works by Fontana, Gauguin, Modigliani and Morandi, which we had first presented at Frieze.”



Courtesy of Hauser & Wirth

The numbers reveal a familiar art-market pattern: a few high-value transactions drove the overall revenue, while the vast majority of works sold at lower price points. Out of roughly 306 reported sales, works under \$100,000 made up 47% of transactions but only 3.5% of revenue. The \$100,000-to-\$1 million bracket accounted for 43% of sales and 27% of revenue, while the top 10% (priced over \$1 million) generated 69% of the total value. The fair's early closure significantly disrupted this momentum. While international VIPs buy early, weekend visitors from France and neighboring countries lost their chance to attend, and galleries lost crucial time to finalize tentative deals.

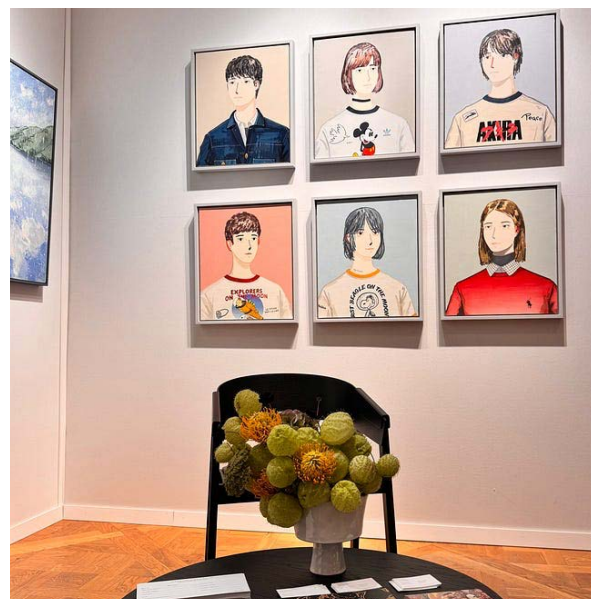
Despite this disruption, strong opening sales and robust international attendance solidified Art Basel Paris's key position in the autumn calendar. But to understand the week, one had to look beyond the Grand Palais. Paris's art calendar has evolved into an expansive, multi-tiered ecosystem that extends beyond the fair. Satellite events, institutional openings, and private gallery presentations now form a highly interconnected circuit, drawing international capital through diverse neighbourhoods. A trajectory that began at the focused presentation of Asia NOW, moved through the city's major museums, and concluded within the Grand Palais revealed a market of distinct, coexisting conversations.

Asia NOW and a wider view of the art world

At the Monnaie de Paris, Asia NOW offered an important opening perspective on Monday morning. In its twelfth edition, the fair brought together galleries and artists working across a wide range of Asian contexts, reinforcing its role as a platform for practices that can be overlooked when the international market is viewed primarily through its European and American centres.



One of my favourite presentations was Galerie Taménaga's, devoted to three Japanese artists: Wataru Ozu, Chiharu Yakushigawa and Takehiko Sugawara. Ozu's landscapes, portraits and still lifes move between classical Japanese aesthetics, Western art history and contemporary visual culture. Yakushigawa's works, in which pigments are applied directly to the canvas using her hands and feet, carry the physical trace of the artist's body. Sugawara's monumental abstract work, meanwhile, offered a tribute to the vitality of nature following the artist's recent passing. Together, the presentation moved between abstraction and figuration without losing a sense of material sensitivity or connection to the natural world.





Galerie Taménaga's booth at Asia Now 2026.

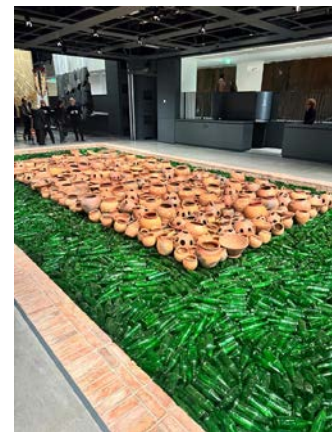
The presentation also resonated with Galerie Taménaga's wider programme in Paris. Its exhibition *Floating Worlds* by Kyosuke Tchinai, on view until 31 October, offered another perspective on contemporary Japanese painting. Drawing on the tradition of Edo-period ukiyo-e prints and *byōbu* folding screens, Tchinai's dreamlike landscapes are populated by cranes, rocks, cherry blossoms and lunar light. His vision of nature, in which each element seems to possess a spiritual life of its own, provided a quieter counterpoint to the intensity of fair week.



Galerie Taménaga - Kyosuke Tchinai - Danse des camélias - 116 x 89 cm.

Ibrahim Mahama: history on an architectural scale

Monday's other major highlight was Ibrahim Mahama's *The Harvest Season* at Fondation Cartier. Opened on 22 October, the exhibition marked a major Paris presentation for the Ghanaian artist, whose large-scale installations transform industrial materials, archives and fragments of infrastructure into reflections on labour, history and collective memory.

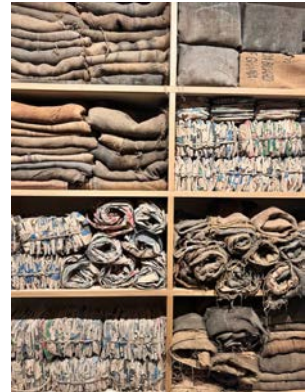


Ibrahim Mahama - *The Harvest Season* - Fondation Cartier, Paris.

Mahama's practice is inseparable from his commitment to building cultural infrastructure in Ghana, particularly through the art centres he has established in Tamale. The exhibition's scale was impressive, but what stayed with me was its collective approach. Mahama was joined by nine artists and collectives, including Gideon Appah, James Barnor, Dorothy Akpene Amenuke and the Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise.

Rather than treating the exhibition as a self-contained survey of one artist's career, the presentation created space for a wider network of practices, histories

and exchanges. The result was an exhibition in which material, architecture and social relationships became inseparable.



Works of Gideon Appah and Zohra Opoku at The Harvest Season - Fondation Cartier, Paris.

Stan Douglas at Jeu de Paume: History Through the Lens of Cécile Degos

At Jeu de Paume, *Parallax*, the major exhibition devoted to Stan Douglas, provided another compelling shift in perspective. The exhibition, on view from 20 October 2026 to 10 January 2027, is the artist's most significant monographic presentation in France in more than three decades. Since the late 1980s, Douglas has explored how history is constructed, represented and transmitted, often using elaborate narrative structures to reveal the instability of what we think we know. The exhibition's scenography was designed by Cécile Degos.



Stan Douglas - Parallax - Jeu de Paume, Concorde

A central work, *Birth of a Nation* (2025), reworks the visual language of D. W. Griffith's 1915 film, a landmark of cinema whose racist narrative helped reinforce a distorted historical imagination. Douglas's intervention opens up the possibility of looking again at the stories through which power has been represented and at those whose voices have been excluded from them.

Alexander Calder at Hauser & Wirth and the Matignon Saint-Honoré nocturne

Later that day, Hauser & Wirth's Calder: François Premier offered a compelling look at the period in which Alexander Calder's return to France opened new directions in his practice. After two decades in the United States, Calder and his wife, Louisa, settled in 1953 first at Les Granettes, a rural hamlet outside Aix-en-Provence, in a house without running water or electricity, before acquiring François Premier, a 17th-century stone property in Saché, in the Loire Valley. Encouraged to return by their friends, the painter André Masson and his wife, Rose, the move proved creatively transformative.



Installation view, 'Calder: François Premier' Hauser & Wirth Paris, 2026. © 2026 Calder Foundation, New York / ADAGP, Paris. Courtesy of Calder Foundation, New York / Art Resource, New York. Photo: Nicolas Brasseur

Highlights included *Les Granettes* (1953), a large-scale standing mobile, and *The Putney Mobile* (1954), a suspended mobile, both presented publicly for the first time in more than seventy years, alongside *Guava* (1955) and a significant group of ink and gouache paintings. Together, the works traced Calder's experimentation with movement, balance and abstraction across sculpture and works on paper. The presentation also included a conversation between Alexander S. C. Rower, Calder's grandson and president of the Calder Foundation, and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist.



Calder: François Premier | Hauser & Wirth Paris

The evening continued with MaSH, the Matignon Saint-Honoré nocturne, bringing 38 galleries together for a collective opening across Paris's 8th arrondissement. With the neighbourhood temporarily pedestrianised, art lovers could move between exhibitions, encounter different corners of the market and experience the social energy that makes Paris Art Week distinctive. Among the highlights along the route were Skarstedt's *Alberto Giacometti & Yves Tanguy: Solitude and Silence*, bringing two singular visions of modernism into dialogue; Opera Gallery's *Warhol, Basquiat, Haring: Une amitié artistique*, exploring the artistic connections between three defining figures of New York's downtown scene; and Galerie Taménaga's *Floating Worlds*, featuring the dreamlike landscapes of Japanese artist Kyosuke Tchinai. Together, the exhibitions offered

three very different perspectives on artistic solitude, creative exchange and imagined worlds.

Manuel Mathieu's *Ayizan*: Entering the Artist's Own Temple

On Tuesday, at Galerie Poggi, Haitian-Canadian artist Manuel Mathieu invited visitors into *Ayizan*, his first solo exhibition in France. On view from 21 October to 28 November, the exhibition marked a significant moment in the artist's expanding international career, following his participation in the 61st Venice Biennale and alongside his presentation at Art Basel Paris.



Manuel Mathieu - *Ayizan* - Galerie Poggi, Paris.

Named after Ayizan, a central spiritual figure in Haitian Vodou and the artist's own first given name, the exhibition takes its title from a powerful symbol of protection, sacred knowledge and cultural transmission. Regarded as the guardian of traditional medicine and marketplaces, Ayizan has also been invoked as a figure of resistance throughout Haiti's history, including during the struggle for independence that began in 1791. For Mathieu, she provides a conceptual

framework through which the personal and collective, the ancestral and the contemporary, remain inseparable. The exhibition unfolds across paintings, drawings, mosaics, photography and an installation made from iron wire.

With Mathieu also selected by curator Koyo Kouoh to exhibit in both the Arsenale and Giardini at the Venice Biennale this year, *Ayizan* arrives at a pivotal moment. Yet its significance lies in more than the momentum of an international career. The exhibition proposes a way of understanding art as a living tradition: one capable of carrying memory across generations, challenging inherited narratives and creating space for histories that continue to shape the present. In Mathieu's own words, it is an invitation to gather and to recognise cultural inheritance not as something static, but as a force that remains very much alive.

Art Basel Paris 2026: Inside the Grand Palais

By Wednesday, the focus had shifted to the Grand Palais, where Art Basel Paris brought together 211 galleries from 41 countries and regions. The fair's scale is part of its appeal, but its character lies in the contrasts it creates: historical masterpieces alongside emerging practices, monumental installations beside intimate works, and internationally established galleries sharing space with younger programmes. This year's edition included 183 galleries in the main Galleries sector, 16 in Emergence and 12 in Premise, reflecting the fair's ambition to accommodate different stages of artistic and gallery development. More than 30 participating galleries were less than ten years old, while six galleries had graduated from Emergence into the main sector.



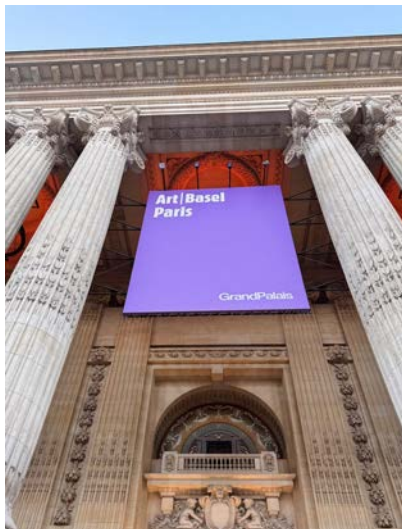
The UBS Global Art salon



The UBS Global Art salon was one of the places where the fair's commercial and cultural dimensions came together. Its presentation, *Earthly Paradise: Nature Reimagined*, brought together works from the UBS Art Collection around a subject that has connected artists across centuries and cultures: the natural world. Mountains, horizons, forests, celestial bodies and fantastical creatures became ways of thinking about belonging, transformation and humanity's relationship with the environment. Etel Adnan's luminous landscapes distilled her relationship with Mount Tamalpais into vivid fields of colour, while Raqib Shaw's *Harvest Moon*(2020) transformed memories of Kashmir into an intricate, fantastical setting shaped by loss and resilience. The UBS Art Collection, with more than 40,000 works by influential artists, is among the world's leading corporate art collections. Its presentation at the fair demonstrated how corporate collecting can extend beyond acquisition, creating opportunities for sustained engagement with art and bringing thought-provoking works into professional and public spaces where they continue to inspire dialogue.

Masterpieces, Scale and Spectacle

Across the main Galleries sector, the fair's established galleries presented a broad cross-section of modern and contemporary art.



Art Basel Paris 2026

- One of the most closely watched presentations was the new secondary-market venture Pace Di Donna Schrader Galleries. Its central work, Amedeo Modigliani's *Nu étendu (Lolotte)* (1917), was offered at an asking price above \$100 million. The reclining nude had an exceptional history: the work had remained in the same private collection since 1920, when it was acquired from Modigliani's dealer Léopold Zborowski. Its appearance at the fair marked its return to the market after more than a century. The

painting did not sell during the reported opening days, but its presence became one of the edition's defining talking points. The presentation also included works by Constantin Brancusi, Jean Dubuffet and Alexander Calder, creating a wider conversation around the history of modern sculpture.

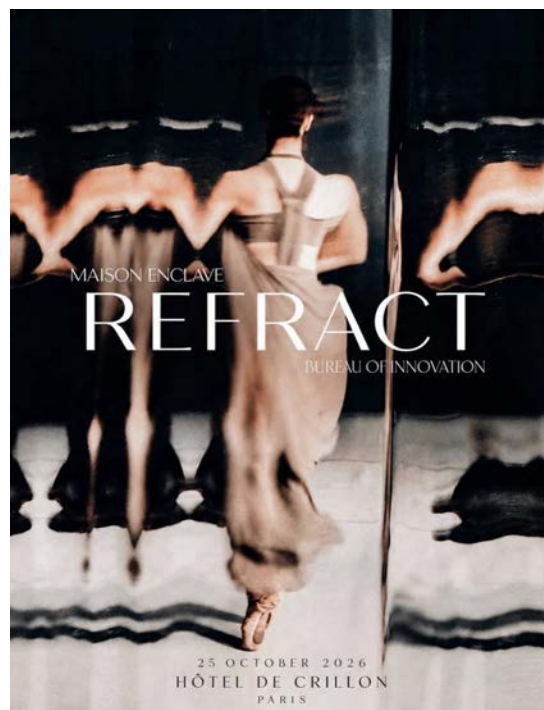
- Among the presentations I found most memorable was also Galerie Eva Presenhuber's *silence*, curated by Ugo Rondinone. The booth brought together artists across generations and media in a salon-style installation that encouraged a slower, more associative way of looking. A solitary red-and-black figure anchored the display, creating a moment of stillness amid the fair's visual density. Its strength lay in the relationships between the works: rather than relying on one headline piece, the presentation created a coherent atmosphere and invited visitors to spend time with it.
- Galerie Poggi's presentation was another highlight, particularly after seeing Manuel Mathieu's *Ayizan* at the gallery the previous day. At the fair, Mathieu's work entered a different conversation, set against an international field of artists and collectors. The presentation also included works by Kapwani Kiwanga, whose practice examines histories of power, material culture and the ways systems of knowledge are constructed. Seeing these artists in both gallery and fair contexts made it possible to consider how the scale and setting of an exhibition can change the experience of a work without diminishing its underlying concerns.
- Sprüth Magers approached the fair through the language of images, text, desire and public space. Barbara Kruger's monumental *Untitled (Forget to remember)* (2024) confronted visitors with its stark lettering, while Sylvie Fleury's *pleasures* (1990) repeated its title across alternating black and pink stripes. Fleury's sculpture *Patrick & Piet & Josef (I)* (1996), featuring slingback heels on a pedestal of coloured planes, brought fashion and consumer culture into conversation with the visual language of modernist abstraction.
- I was equally drawn to Ermes Ermes's dedicated presentation of Beatrice Bonino. Having first encountered Bonino's work at Fondation Pernod Ricard, I was interested to see her practice occupy the international fair setting. Her sculptural environment brought everyday materials into unfamiliar relationships, inviting reflection on the meanings objects acquire once they are removed from their original functions. The presentation stood out precisely because it did not depend on spectacle: it offered a distinctive visual and conceptual world within the larger fair.

- At Mennour, Ugo Rondinone's monumental stone figure *the angelic* (2024) made an immediate impression. Built from roughly hewn, stacked stone blocks, the sculpture seemed to stand guard over the movement of visitors through the fair. The booth juxtaposed this imposing contemporary work with historical and modern artists, including Manoucher Yektai, Sonia Delaunay, Francis Picabia and Henri Matisse. Alicja Kwade's *Siège du Monde* (2026), a large sphere of pale stone resting on a wooden chair, offered another striking encounter between apparent weight and precarious balance.

These booths shared an important quality. They had a point of view. In an environment where visitors can move rapidly from one recognisable name to another, a strong presentation gives the eye a reason to pause and the mind a reason to return.

Final Details

As Paris Art Week draws to a close, REFRACT offers a final encounter between contemporary art, design and performance. Presented tonight, October 25, at the Hôtel de Crillon, the project is a collaboration between Maison Enclave, founded by Audrey Freeman, and Bureau of Innovation.



Choreographed by Manon Dubourdeaux, the contemporary ballet explores the mirror as both an instrument of self-discovery and a surface capable of distorting what it reflects. Five dancers perform amid glass installations, sculptural roses and candlelight, within a scenography by Tino Seubert and Roham Shamekh and accompanied by an original score by _BY.ALEXANDER. Rather than separating performers from spectators through a conventional stage, the audience is seated around the dancers, making perspective and proximity central to the experience. The wider presentation, curated by Bureau of Innovation in dialogue with the Charles Riva Collection, brings the moving body into conversation with works by artists including Robert Mapplethorpe, Richard Avedon, Christopher Wool, Daniel Richter and Cécile Defforey. Photography, painting, collectible design and choreography meet in a setting where the fleeting gesture of performance contrasts with the enduring presence of the artwork.

In its own way, REFRACT captures something essential about Paris Art Week: the experience of art changes with the context in which it is encountered. Across the city, the week unfolded not only through transactions at the fair, but through exhibitions, conversations and rendez-vous that offered different ways of looking. As Art Basel Paris director Karim Crippa said, the fair is “part of an ecosystem that connects galleries, institutions, artists, collectors, and the wider creative community.” That ecosystem is what gives Paris its distinctive appeal.

Until next time,

Politics of Details