

## THE NERVE CENTER

Art Basel, perhaps the world's most important fair, grows to include new stakeholders such as digital natives

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"Portrait de Dora Maar," 1939, by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), oil and gouache on paper, at Galerie 1900-2000 in the Galleries sector of Art Basel

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## Q&A: SVEN EISENHUT, FOUNDING DIRECTOR, PHOTO BASEL CONNECTING WITH PHOTOGRAPHY BEYOND POINT-AND-SHOOT

Photo Basel hopes to make the most of the current trend of robust sales for works of artistic photography

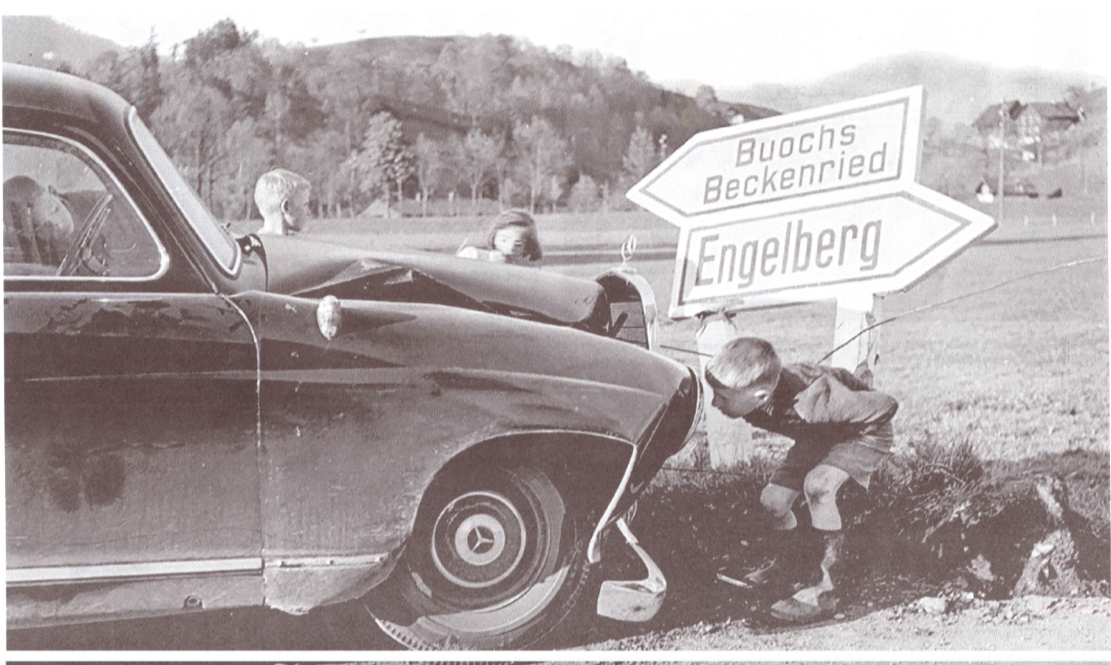


PHOTO BASEL, TO be held from June 14-18 at Volkshaus Basel, is Switzerland's first international art fair dedicated to photography based art. Held parallel to Art Basel, its focus on artistic photography underscores the importance this medium has come to acquire in our lives, and is also a nod to the art finding its place in the market. Though only a few years old, it has already become the go-to destination for all those who have a stake in making photography the higher form of art that it veritably is.



Ahead of the next edition of Photo Basel, the fair's founding director Sven Eisenhut speaks to BLOUIN ARTINFO about the fair, its economic viability and the art of photography.

**In an age when everybody is a photographer, what is the significance of a picture? How does one sift the artwork from the massive haystack of photography being created digitally every second?**  
Since the invention of photography in the 19th century to the selfie culture of today, photography has always been used to expose, dramatize or perform something.



What makes a photograph interesting is the dynamics in the confrontation between the photographer and object or subject. Digital photography and smartphones are brilliant tools of our times, and Annie Leibowitz has called smartphones "the snapshot camera of today." As with all mediums of art, it invariably centres around the question of the relativity of taste with everything being subjective.

**Switzerland while a Sotheby's expert has already hailed it as one of the top five photography events of the year. What do you think gives Photo Basel a cutting edge over others?**  
Its small size with up to 40 exhibitors means the visitors, collectors and aficionados get to spend some time with the galleries and artists more closely. Photo Basel is also very international, exhibiting 16 different nations from five continents. The Photo Basel team is constantly

traveling to other art fairs and aims to scout artists first, and then approach the galleries that represent them. We prefer this

**You intend to make Photo Basel the hub of artistic photography in**

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"Dardar," 1959, by celebrated Swiss police officer Arnold Odermatt (born 1925), presented by Galerie Springer



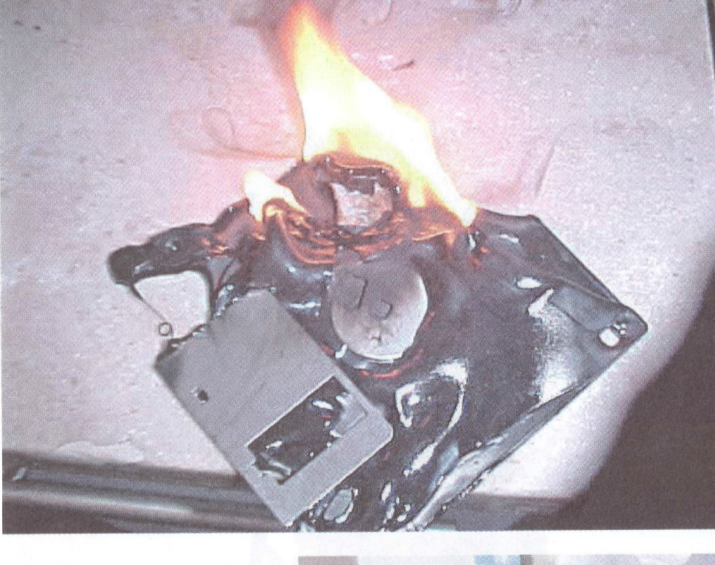
Left: Photo Basel Founding Director Sven Eisenhut Above: "Bambi and Ica," 2014, by Alfred Drago Reus at Galleria Faffiche

curated approach. We are also very lucky to receive great applications because they believe in the fair and know how hard we work. In addition, Basel becomes somewhat of the cultural super hub during June.

**Even earlier, artistic photography didn't sell in the same figures as**

**conventional works of art did, and they don't do so now. How, then, does a fair achieve its most important goal — of getting good sales in each edition?**  
I read a report recently on arttactic.com by Anders Petterson who explained that overall, photography at auction has remained steady since the second half of

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2015, with contemporary sales becoming more popular among buyers. Naturally, this will spill over into the sales at art fairs also. Photography is a very accessible medium that non-art world people can understand more easily than most artistic mediums. I have a strong and encouraging belief that things will only get better!

**Could you share some highlights**

discover emerging talents such as Sebastian Dier (exhibited by Gallery Dix 9, Paris). He just had a show at the Museum Folkwang (Essen, Germany) with Thomas Ruff. His Angeles-based Reine Paradis (Galerie Catherine and André Hug) creates surreal stages of color and prefab accessories —



**"Japan" series by Julia Bales, at Gallery Albrecht**  
Left: "Hope 3," 2014, by Courtney Roy, from her Hope project, presented by Galerie Hug at Photo Basel this year



all her work is blue with orange, very captivating and fresh. Furthermore, we will see a lot of "unique" work (which is quite special in terms of photography). Here, I would like to highlight the works of Switzerland-based artist Iris Hutegger (represented by Galerie Esther Woerdehoff, Paris). Iris stitches over her photography in a month long process — it is an absolutely fantastic work.

In addition, every fair should also show some masters. This year, we are blessed to see works by Werner Bischof, René Burri, Simone Kappeler, Arnold Odermatt, Edward Arnolds, Joel-Peter Witkin, Herb Ritts, Erwin Olaf, Andreas Fux, Nan Goldin, Imogen Cunningham, Luigi Ghirri, Gilles Caron, Michael Kenna, Pablo Ortiz Monasterio, Paolo Ventura, Newsha Tavakolian, Robert Mapplethorpe, Roger Ballen, Georges Rouse, Saul Leiter, Sascha Goldberg and Vincent Fournier.

Left: "Birds 33," 2011, by Yohei Kichiraku, at Kano Kawanishi Gallery



**"Bosen," 2014, by Basel-based Joschi Herzog at Galerie Monika Wertheimer**

**What are the current trends in the field that will be reflected in the upcoming Photo Basel?**  
This year's content is defined by many works strongly identifying with the current world issues, and their aim is to bring new reflections and new points of view on current events. Furthermore, we are proud to showcase young, upcoming artists who are brought in dialogue with more established artists. In addition,

we're excited to welcome the new Tape/Basel section which is devoted entirely to the moving image. It offers a platform for another lens-based medium, giving an opportunity to the artists to show their works.

— Photo Basel runs through June 14-18 at Volkshaus Basel, Rebgasse 12-14, CH-4058, Basel

— ARCHANA KHARE-GHOSE