

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Art Basel highlights intersections of art with luxury, technology

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Calvin Klein installation for Design Miami/Basel. Image credit: Calvin Klein

By SARAH JONES

As the art world descends on Basel, Switzerland for Art Basel, luxury brands are getting in on the action.

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Held from June 14 to 17, Art Basel will include exhibitions, events and other efforts from brands including Audemars Piguet and BMW. The luxury world and the art world share a number of affinities, frequently drawing on each other for inspiration and collaboration.

"There is a very natural link between the luxury industry and the art industry," said Pontus Silfverstolpe, cofounder of **Barnebys**, Stockholm, Sweden.

"For example the most searched at Barnebys last year was Rolex, followed by a lot of other luxury brands like Tiffany, Cartier Chopard, Patek Philippe, etc.," he said. "The simple answer is that art and luxury brands attract the same people, and that the art fair has become an arena for the world's richest people.

"Art provides a context and an added value to brands that work with quality, authenticity and storytelling."

Art meets luxury

For Art Basel, Audemars Piguet has commissioned "Halo," an immersive installation by art duo Semiconductor. The experience, developed in partnership with CERN, places visitors in a ring of sound and light.

Art Basel 2018 Semiconductor's artwork titled "Halo" - Audemars Piguet

Art Basel lead partner UBS will be hosting a lounge showcasing work from artist Carlos Cruz-Diez that is in the bank's collection. In collaboration with Mr. Diez's studio, the lounge exhibit will mark the first time since 2011 that the pieces have been on display in the same place.

German automaker BMW is also committing to sponsoring the arts by continuing its longstanding partnership with Art Basel this year.

BMW will on-site to offer shuttle services for VIP guests. Additionally, BMW will sponsor many of the artistic exhibitions as part of its BMW Art Journey campaign ([see story](#)).



BMW's Art Journey returns for Art Basel this year. Image credit: BMW

At Art Basel, the automaker announced Zac Langdon-Pole as the latest recipient of its Art Journey. The artist will be exploring the flight paths of birds to help better understand humans' place in the world.

Along with Art Basel, other design and art events are being held outside of the show.

Calvin Klein is presenting at Design Miami/Basel for the first time. The show, now in its 13th year, is held concurrently with the Art Basel fair from June 12 to 17.

The brand's chief creative officer Raf Simons envisioned "An Expansive International Landscape," which includes an American barn. Mr. Simons also collaborated with home furnishings label Cassina to create custom-made armchairs by designer Gaetano Pesce.

Calvin Klein's installation also showcases works by pop artist Andy Warhol.

Also during Design Miami/Basel, the commissioned works from the 2018 Swarovski Designers of the Future Award will be showcased. Three winners were chosen earlier this year, and were tasked with developing designs around the idea of "smart living" using Swarovski materials.

For instance, Frank Kolkman created a "Dream Machine" that creates a trancelike environment courtesy of light and sound patterns emitted from crystals.

Meanwhile, Yosuke Ushigome's installation investigates the potential for different interfacing with smart homes, swapping out voice controls for crystals.

As they were working on their projects, the designers visited Swarovski's headquarters in Wattens, Austria, to view the company's archives and explore its innovations.

In addition to showcasing the winners' creations, Atelier Swarovski will be highlighting its own home decor designs during the fair.



Design Miami/Basel. Image credit: Swarovski

"[Being part of Art Basel] shows that one consciously protects what customers have and want to deal with," Mr. Silverstolpe said. "It's not just about finding buyers for the watches, but it's also about finding the right ambassadors for them.

"Art Basel is the world's leading exhibition of contemporary art, creating credibility for any other brand," he said.

"I'm sure it has a good impact on the brands."

Blockchain debut

During Art Basel, the art world's intersection with technology will also be on view.

Artist Noritoshi Hirakawa is curating what claims to be the first blockchain art exhibit. Presented by SAAB Projects, the Today is the Day Foundation and the Tomita Family Collection, "Untapped" uses technology from ArtToken to assign unique identifier to works from emerging artists.

The luxury business, plagued by grey market goods and counterfeiting, could take these issues head on in the future through the use of blockchain technology.

During the webinar "[Why luxury needs blockchain](#)," on June 7, executives in the industry discussed how the tech can solve problems that exist within the luxury sector. One panelist said that blockchain technology will eventually be as integrated, if not more so than, the Internet without users needing to understand its workings ([see story](#)).

"The art and the art market has always been reflecting the society," Mr. Silfverstolpe said. "This is a great example. Even if art so far has been a physical experience for most people, there is no doubt that technology has been taking over a great part of both the art industry as well as the art experience.

"Barnebys has seen this coming, and it is actually a very interesting way to track and verify art works in the future," he said.

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