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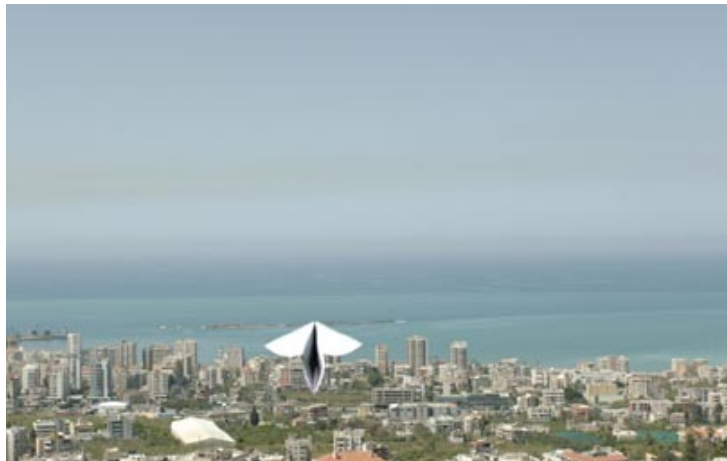
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Board: from Biennale to Basel

Artists feel about exhibiting at both events in quick succession

by [Ben Luke](#). From [Art Basel daily edition](#)
online: 11 June 2013



Zaatar's *Letter to a Refusing Pilot*, 2013, is on show in Venice (still shown here). Zaatar's "builders" series can be seen at Art Basel

Basel following the Venice Biennale so swiftly, galleries at the fair / focus on artists who feature in Venice. But as Matt Mullican, who / shows huge pieces at both events, says of art fairs: "It was much more / 20 or 30 years ago." And while Basel and other fairs will never rival / or prestige on an artist's CV, artists' involvement with fairs has / become deeper and richer in recent years. So what is it like for artists to / exhibit at both events in quick succession?

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Official pavilions remain the Biennale's most loaded spaces. Akram / El Kaabachi, showing in the Lebanese pavilion at the Arsenale, suggests that / the artist has a conflicting relationship with the country that he comes / from. He says that "artists are not football players, they don't compete, / they're representing their countries". His 35-minute video (see box, above right) is / presented as the voice of a country at war" and is based on an open letter / to an Israeli pilot who refused to bomb a school run by Zaatari's / family during the 1982 Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon. "It's so / difficult to be in such a prestigious event, particularly with such a / dramatic story, but as much as the work is extremely personal, it's universal / and relevant today," he says. But he is conscious of the added exposure / that comes with the fairs: "Frankly, it seems almost like getting naked."

[Read more](#) with Thomas Dane Gallery (2.0/M15), Zaatari is showing

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iders", 2011, a series of found photographs, and some erotic
 . "I've never shown my drawings on the market," he says.
 res you like to test things, so you use a forum like this one and it
 u make a judgement." Is he comfortable showing his art at fairs?
 an't live without the market, so we'd better address it up front and
 it," he says.

ce and responsibility

socially and politically-minded artist, the Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar,
 saying that fairs "reveal everything we need to know about the art
 f you have any illusions when you're in a museum or gallery that it
 of the larger capitalist system or the larger market system, then all
 sions are shattered with the fair." Jaar believes that he can bring
 to major issues from within this system, "by creating a structure
 solate my audience for a few minutes and tell them a different
 n that being told outside my space". That structure features in the
 l section: Sound of Silence, 2006, ([1/U42], see box, above right)
 cubic metre "theatre built for a single image", focusing on a
 ph by the late photojournalist Kevin Carter.

s he is happy to "have the exposure and responsibility" of showing
 vilion, nearly three decades on from being the first Latin American
 how in Venice in 1986. But while Venice today is a meeting point
 l artists and art professionals, this international community "is not
 in the architecture of the place", he says. He explores this
 ce in the pavilion, creating "a poetic invitation to rethink the
 avilion model".

st to the pavilion artists, most in the international exhibition show
 works chosen with the exhibition's curator, Massimiliano Gioni,
 an creating new pieces. The artist Jessica Jackson Hutchins says
 known Gioni for a long time, "so it was fun to talk to him about the
 and choose the work together." She explains that she feels her
 ould "stand up to the pressure" of being in different contexts in
 ows. Her combinations of found household objects with homespun
 and plaster sculptures are paired in Venice with work by Eugene
 nchenhein, one of several outsider artists who feature in Gioni's
 mpting a sustained connection. "Even without looking at [Von
 nhein's] work a lot now, I am in my studio and this guy has been
 ind," she says. "I now have a little dialogue with this American
 artist."

pace

lican's work—often paintings with dense imagery and symbols
 on knowledge and drawing on hypnotic delirium—makes him the
 gure for Gioni's show. "My work does fit into the general theme of
 ; certainly," he says. "When I represent encyclopaedic elements,
 rfect because it is based on fulfilling some kind of subjective
 e admits he was "excited" at the prospect of exhibiting in Venice.
 er been invited to this show," he says, "so I'm happy to be invited
 s to come and be a part of it." Though Gioni initially had a
 r work in mind to pair with another outsider, Hilma af Klint, he and
 eventually chose Learning From That Person's Work, 2005, which
 in the Arsenale (see box, above left), without Af Klint in close
 "It was a give and take between us," Mullican says. Meanwhile,
 in Basel could easily have featured in Venice—it was one of the
 at triggered Gioni's invitation. Two Into One Becomes Three, 2011,
 gest painting ever shown in Unlimited, measuring 22 x 7 metres
 Mullican was "very happy" that his galleries, Klosterfelde (2.0/J10)
 36 (2.0/M12), wanted to show the work. "The nice thing about

It is that your work stands alone,” he says. “You don’t have a lot of the booth with you... It’s a hybrid space, which you have more and more in the art world—it’s not really a gallery show or a museum show or a fair, it’s in between.”

For example, Jessica Jackson Hutchins, who shows with Timothy Taylor (2.0/A11), also has a solo booth with Laurel Gitlen in Basel’s Contemporary section (S19). She is showing three large sculptures. “I’m trying to do a few pieces to do all those things that you do in a gallery, but that’s what it has got to be very tight,” she says. “I see a gravity to what I do, an ethical stance to how I make the work, but there’s also got to be a sense of humour and lightness. To do all that within the context of the art fair, maybe that’s harder.”

Tompkins’s presence in Basel is much smaller, with three intimate paintings on the Modern Institute’s stand (2.0/N15) that are “like an extension” of her work at the Scottish pavilion in Venice, placed on the wall and held to the floor as they are in Venice. Tompkins saw preparing for the fair as “like making work for another solo exhibition”, but she admits that elsewhere, it has filtered into my mind that I will probably only do this once. The critical feeling of it is more heightened than anything I’ve done before. But the experience, not least the budget, has allowed her “to be more focused about the work”, she says, expanding her use of photography, for

as a contributor to the Modern Institute’s booths, Tompkins describes art fairs as “a perverse relationship. It’s one of need, but I do enjoy doing work for them. I’m not too stressed out by the pressure. I find I can take risks... The art fair really helps me trial things and things out and seen.”

Zaatari’s paintings in Basel are an intimate counterpoint to the more shrill atmosphere of the fair. “I want them to feel lively and life-enhancing rather than just a site,” she says. “I wonder if people [at art fairs] see that—there’s a sense of life in it.”

’s view: Martine d’Anglejan-Chatillon, Thomas Dane Gallery)

Zaatari’s work for Thomas Dane’s booth in Basel is “a counterpoise to the fair”, says D’Anglejan-Chatillon, a partner at the gallery. She adds that she would have him on the back of Venice and not include him in the booth because “it would have been an own goal”. An artist showing in Venice is “always a challenge”, she says, even if the gallery needs to raise production costs, which often happens, though not in Zaatari’s case. “That’s part of what we do, it’s our job and our responsibility to the artists,” she explains. “It’s a bit disingenuous to say that we don’t harness the energy of Venice because it happens that Basel is a week afterwards, but we’re also harnessing the power of his Museum of Modern Art show, which opened in 2011].... all of these things are part of an arc of achievements that lead to one another.”

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