

Art Fairs

The 6 Best—and Riskiest—Artworks at Art Basel Unlimited, Where the Fair's Supersized Artwork Shines

Among the show-stopping works is a Buddhist take on casino capitalism.

Tim Schneider & Kate Brown, June 11, 2019

Although Art Basel Unlimited should never be treated as a harbinger of the type of work that galleries will present in the main fair, the 2019 edition of the section manages to deliver the one thing that nearly every fairgoer wants, even if they don't realize it: risk.

In what is slated to be Gianni Jetzer's swan-song edition of the section (he has organized it for the past eight years), the curator has brought together a collection of monumental pieces memorable for their ability to walk the wire between spectacle and substance. The best of the lot deftly engage with relevant sociopolitical issues, approach aesthetics with a glint in their eye, or do both.

In the process, they set Art Basel's Swiss mothership on a compelling path forward. (The main fair opens to invited collectors today.) Will the booths sucking up the majority of the Messeplatz's oxygen for the next seven days match these works' vigor? While we wait for what comes next, here are our six standout works at Unlimited 2019.

MONICA BONVICINI
***Breathing* (2017)**

Galleria Raffaella Cortese; Galerie Peter Kilchmann; Mitchell-Innes & Nash



Monica Bonvicini, *Breathing* (2017). Presented by Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Mitchell-Innes & Nash. Photography by Andrea Rosetti. Courtesy of the artist, Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, and Mitchell-Innes & Nash.

The sound of Bonvicini's *Breathing* is not the sound of breath, but it beckons viewers to the kinetic installation all the same. Above the din of Unlimited's crowd, an overhead array of pistons whirr and snap like the jaws of some iron dragon.

What they control is a hydra of black-leather, silver-buckled "men's belts" (as they have been described in past installations) sent swinging, clinking, and slashing across the space in irregular patterns. Simultaneously playful and threatening, the work converts what could be read as a symbol of toxic masculinity—husbands and fathers have too often used belts as makeshift bullwhips for domestic abuse—into a tongue-in-cheek totem of feminist power: the witch's broom. In the process, Bonvicini blends the mechanical and the mystical, the masculine and the feminine, the irreverent and the deadly serious, into a mesmerizing display.

The work is priced at €220,000 and was still available at the end of opening night.

—*Tim Schneider*