

GAGOSIAN


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Gagosian's pop-up gallery in Basel to become permanent *Mega-dealer says “world-class museums” and Ernst Beyeler’s legacy are behind the move*

Anny Shaw



The gallery's prime location is near the luxury hotel Les Trois Rois © David Owens

What a difference a week makes. The New York dealer Larry Gagosian’s “pop-up” in Basel, which opened its doors to a steady throng of well-heeled collectors yesterday, is to become a permanent gallery.

“We were close to securing the lease [last week]—it was just awkward timing,” says Andy Avini, a senior director at Gagosian who is overseeing the move. The latest addition takes Gagosian’s empire to 17 galleries in ten cities, including Geneva.

Occupying a modestly sized but well-proportioned ground-floor space at Rheinsprung 1, Gagosian Basel is conveniently located a stone’s throw from Les Trois Rois hotel, where the wealthiest collectors stay during Art Basel.

The strategic location appears to be paying off. According to Avini, trade was brisk on the opening day (prices range from \$375,000 to \$25m). The inaugural show, *Continuing Abstraction*, positions contemporary works by artists such as Theaster Gates and Mary Weatherford alongside historical pieces by Yves Klein, Agnes Martin and Willem de Kooning, among others.

The show closes on Sunday along with Art Basel, but there are plans for a year-long exhibition programme starting in September after some “tweaks” are made to the space. “We don’t want to just have a gallery during the art fair; that would be extremely inappropriate and selfish,” Avini says.

But is there enough of a market in Basel to sustain a mega-gallery like Gagosian year-round? The longstanding local dealer Nicholas Krupp notes that there are just five major galleries in Basel. “There are only half a million people in the city. I make the majority of my money outside of Switzerland,” he says. “There used to be one big dealer in Basel—Ernst Beyeler. Now a big dealer is back in town again.”

Art Basel is the obvious time for local dealers to cash in. “Gagosian will do business during the fair,” Krupp says. “He has probably already sold out his booth, so he needs more space to sell more. Hauser & Wirth has a gallery in Zurich; Gagosian needs somewhere he can bring clients.”

Another Basel dealer who wishes to remain anonymous says: “Ultimately it’s about showing work in the best setting, which will be a consideration with Gagosian’s new advisory business.”

Avini, who has been coming to Basel for the past 22 years, acknowledges Art Basel is key to the gallery’s calendar, but also cites the city’s prestigious collections as another reason for opening in the city. “Basel is interesting because it is new territory, but it is also very familiar territory,” he says. “We want to merge those two and see where we can expand.”

Larry Gagosian is also taking his cue from Basel’s “world class museums”, as he puts it, picking out the Fondation Beyeler, Kunstmuseum and Maja Oeri’s Schaulager as prime examples. “Ernst Beyeler was a close friend,” Gagosian says. “His legacy continues to animate Basel, and Sam Keller has continued where he left off. Why wouldn’t I want to be part of this?”