

L'OFFICIEL ART

## Why the Young Artists at Paris+ par Art Basel Stole the Show

Four artists to watch from the fair's inaugural edition.

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Artwork by Akeem Smith. Courtesy of Paris+ par Art Basel.

Paris+ par Art Basel's inaugural edition at the Grand Palais Ephemere is filled to the brim with blue-chip treasures, from Lucio Fontana eggs to epic portraits by Tom Wesselman and Alice Neel to booth-filling scrolls by Henry Dowager. Even with this climate of abundance, it was the up-and-coming voices that jumped out from the din. Here are the four young artists that we are going to keep up with after the VIP tickets expire.

# Akeem Smith



Courtesy of Paris+ par Art Basel.

An established figure in fashion, Akeem Smith's wall-clinging assemblages mark a new chapter in a practice that has consistently stitched together fragments of the familiar to bring forth compositions that complicate our relationship to the known. In the case of Smith's booth for Heidi gallery in Berlin, the artist stitched together found pieces of metal to create brutal abstractions that invoke historical threads from all over: Gee Bend quilting circles, John Chamberlain's crushed cars, and Mondrian's geometries come to mind. It is the simplicity of the process and the complexity of the final works that make them so appealing, and are undoubtedly the reason why the booth won the Galleries Lafayette commission from the fair's Galleries Émergentes sector.



# Thea Gvetadze



Georgian artist Thea Gvetadze has a thing for echoes and the way they can connect different eras to effortlessly make one continuous gesture. In her solo booth with Tbilisi-based gallery, LC Queisser, Gvetadze looks at her own ripples in art and life. Two works framed in copper depict transparent vests buttoned to the collar with cherries, and chest pockets festooned with images from Gvetadze's first forays into art. These pieces operate as a kind of nostalgic self-portrait, reminding one of the sweetness that art has added to her life. If the garment of memory is light and immaculate, it is because its pockets are full of art. Gvetadze's perspective is the positivity we need in the throes of a marketplace—matched with an imagination big enough to make it real.

# Ser Serpas



Draped over a towering rack, Ser Serpas' canvases at the Essex Street Gallery booth tongues the cheek of a fair full of rigid stretchers determined to keep up appearances. There is an irreverent slacker vibe here that invites passerby to think about the flimsiness of a painting's fabric body without a skeleton to prop it up. It also hints at our own mortality—with fractions of a form appearing in the different slouched panels. Here, a torso; there, a foot. It is an exquisite corpse of sorts that lays bare the vulnerable process behind even the most pristine of portraits. The muddy colors—never resolved into one hue or another—enhance this effect of fluidity.

# Diamond Stingily



Very few artists have the power to transform a bustling art fair into their own world. Diamond Stingily is one of them. The key to her resonance is the economy of her gestures, which only ever provide what is essential to invoke a choke in one's throat. Take for instance, her diptych of black iron gates at Isabella Brtolozzi's booth, which call to mind the entrance of a historic cemetery, the kind one might find disassociated from its original home and hanging in the halls of the Victoria and Albert museum's ironworks collection. Death doesn't need to be explicitly stated; its calling card twists its way around the work like the snakes crawling up its façade. Her wall of hair and metal braids similarly snaps the threads of Atropos into focus—reminding us how close we are to mortality.

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