

Galerie

10 of the Buzziest Artists at Art Basel 2019

From Andrea Bowers to Abdunasser Gharem, these artists caused a stir at this year's edition

Rebecca Anne Proctor

Before Art Basel event opened its doors, there was protest over one of the works that was set to go on view: Andrea Bowers's *Open Secret*, an installation featuring over 200 accounts of sexual harassment. One writer, Helen Donahue, accused the artist of posting an image of her without her permission. That came to a head in the preview days resulting in the removal of part of the work and set the tone for what has been a very socially and politically charged edition of the fair.

There are long lines to experience Saudi artist Abdunasser Gharem's homage to journalist Jamal Khashoggi who was killed at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in the fall of 2018. Coco Fusco's *The Tin Man of the 21st Century* (2018), a sculpture modeled after the beloved character from *The Wizard of Oz*, offers satirical commentary on a less universally beloved public figure: Donald Trump. And Alicia Framis's *LifeDress* (2018) presents a series of white dresses made from the fabric of car air-bags, which puff up at the onset of unwanted advances, offering women physical protection against harassment.

Of note this year were the 19 new galleries joining this year's Basel edition from largely under-represented regions, underlining the increased need for the art world to look beyond its usual stables. These included Temnikova & Kasela from Estonia, Argentinian gallery Barro Arte Contemporaneo, and Beirut-based space Marfa'. The latter presented an architectural model based on the form of Gaza strip tunnels by Palestinian-Jordanian artist Saba Innab. Like

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so many works in this year's Art Basel, in Innab's work notions of displacement, identity and the meaning of home come out to play.

Read on for Galerie selection of some of the buzziest artists on show at this year's edition.

2. Abdunnasser Gharem

After viewing Riyadh-based artist Abdunnasser Gharem's *The Safe* several visitors could be heard whispering: "Will the artist go back to Saudi Arabia?" They were concerned for his safety after staging such a fearless work with references to the controversial Khashoggi murder. At 40-second intervals, visitors are ushered by guards into a sound-proof cell with rubberized walls (rubber is a signature of the artist) like those found in psychiatric wards for violent inmates. There, they can write on the wall or leave their own "imprint" with rubber stamps bearing phrases by Shakespeare and other writers (stamps with hidden messages are a frequent feature of Ghare's work). The installation's power lies in its ability to evoke empathy. Yet even the strains of Beethoven that are heard in the cell do not quell the feelings of powerlessness, distress, and oppression experienced by the viewer here. Staged jointly by Galerie Nagel Draxler Galerie Brigitte Schenk, the work, which is priced at €600,000, already has the interest of several institutions.

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Abdulnasser Ghareem's *The Safe* (2019) at Art Basel Unlimited 2019, Courtesy the artist, Galerie Brigitte Schenk and Galerie Nagel Draxer. Photo: Simon Vogel

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