



whitewall



Mila Dalal Shares Her Top 11 Picks From Art Basel 2026

Walking the halls of Art Basel 2026, Mila Dalal found museum-quality masterpieces, rising stars, and unforgettable paintings that lingered long after leaving the fair.

KATY DONOGHUE
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This week, **Basel** is the center of the art world, and you feel it the moment you walk in. The 2026 edition of Art Basel brings together close to 290 galleries under one roof, and the density is what gets me every year. Works of museum quality sit a few steps from artists most people haven't heard of yet, and somehow it all holds together. It is the one fair where you can see a major historical piece, a blue-chip painting, and a young voice making their first real noise, all in the same afternoon.

same way. I am drawn to color, to feeling, to works that can hold a room on their own and still pull you in for a closer look. A strong painting does not need help. These are the ones that stopped me this year, and the galleries where I found them.

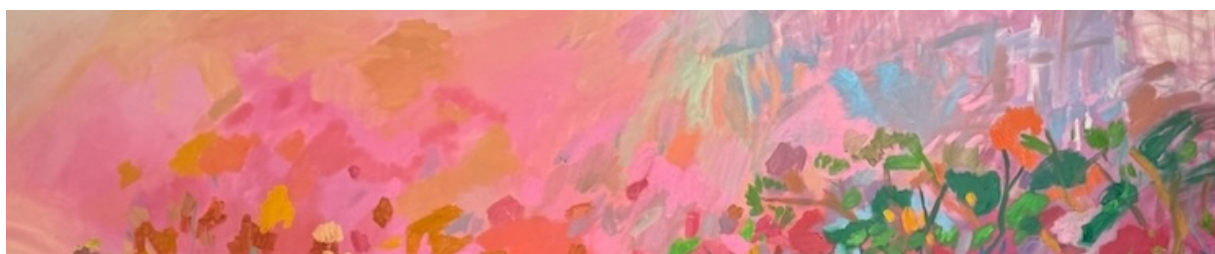
David Hockney at Gray



David Hockney at Gray Gallery.

A simple interior, tables and chairs turned into bold, clashing color that somehow works. Hockney died just days before the fair opened, so standing in front of this one carried real weight. Few artists ever made the everyday feel so alive, and this room is a reminder of exactly that gift.

Shara Hughes at White Cube

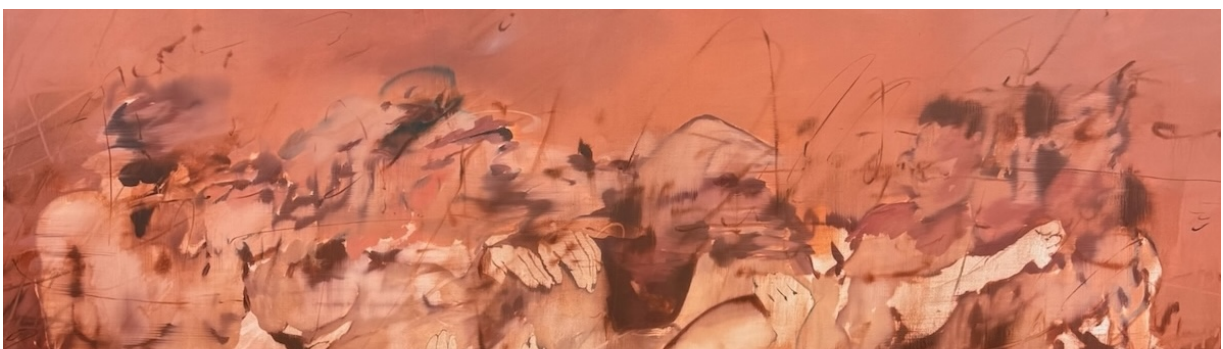




Shara Hughes at White Cube Gallery.

An invented forest under a burning pink sky, the kind of color you can walk straight into. Hughes has built one of the most distinctive voices in painting today. Her landscapes are about feeling, not real places, and that is what keeps pulling me back.

George Rouy at Hauser & Wirth





George Rouy at Hauser & Wirth.

A crowd of bodies dissolving into a copper haze, held to one stained, almost monochrome tone. Rouy is one of the strongest young painters working right now. **Hauser & Wirth** taking him on confirms it, and the work earns every bit of the attention.

Alex Katz at Thaddaeus Ropac





Alex Katz at Thaddaeus Ropac.



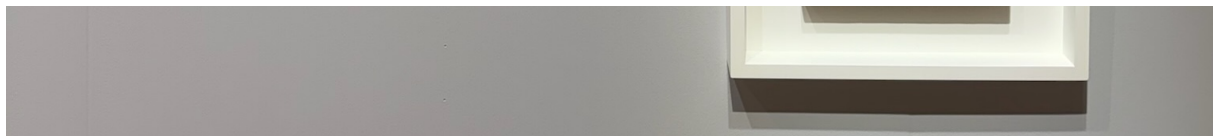


Art Basel 2026.

Of all the ***Katz*** works at the fair, this one, Ann from 1978, caught my eye. It is beautifully painted, her expression calm and serene. That stillness is exactly what keeps pulling me back to his portraits.

Wayne Thiebaud at Acquavella



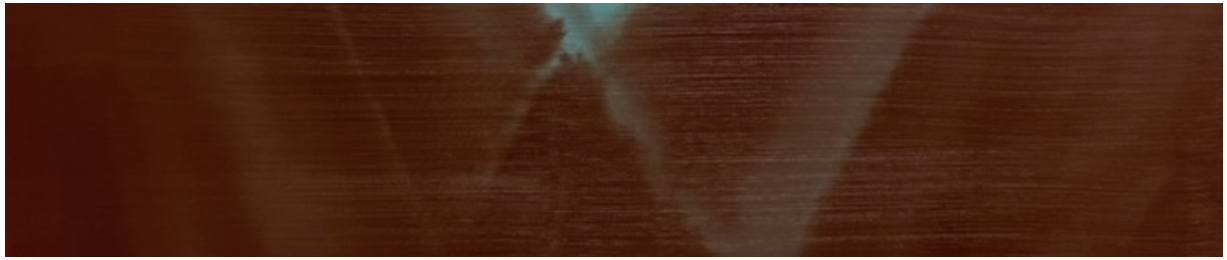


Wayne Thiebaud at Acquavella.

A tight group of small works, a few cake slices, a fish, a tray of sweets. Thiebaud took the most ordinary objects and gave them real presence through paint and light. One of the great American painters, and these small ones show how much he could do with so little.

Yu Nishimura at Crèveccœur





Yu Nishimura at Crevecoeur Gallery.





Art Basel 2026.

A soft, slightly blurred face with a manga feel to it. Nishimura has been one of the real discoveries of the last few years. Looking at his paintings creates a real sense of calm, and this one stayed with me.

Hilary Pecis at David Kordansky





Hilary Percis at David Kordansky Gallery.



Mila Dalal at Art Basel 2026.

A domestic interior full of books, plants and cats, every object placed with care. Pecis turns ordinary rooms into something you want to study closely. Warm, generous, and the kind of painting you would happily live with.

Sabine Moritz at Pilar Corrias



Sabine Moritz at Pilar Corrias Gallery.

This was the surprise of my list. A large gestural abstraction, ribbons of red and blue with bodies surfacing inside the color. Moritz holds her own beside far bigger names, and to me she is genuinely underrated.

Dana Schutz at Contemporary Fine Arts





Dana Schutz at Contemporary Fine Arts Gallery.

A chaotic, fleshy scene, exaggerated bodies crammed against a pink brick wall. Schutz paints with an energy that is almost physical. She takes real risks, and that is what makes her one of the most inventive figurative painters working today.

Derek Fordjour at Petzel





Derek Fordjour at Petzel Gallery.

A seaside terrace in deep purples, blues and warm light. In person it is the material that gets you, built up in layers of cardboard, paper and pastel until the surface has real depth and texture. None of that reads on a screen, which is exactly why his work has to be seen live.

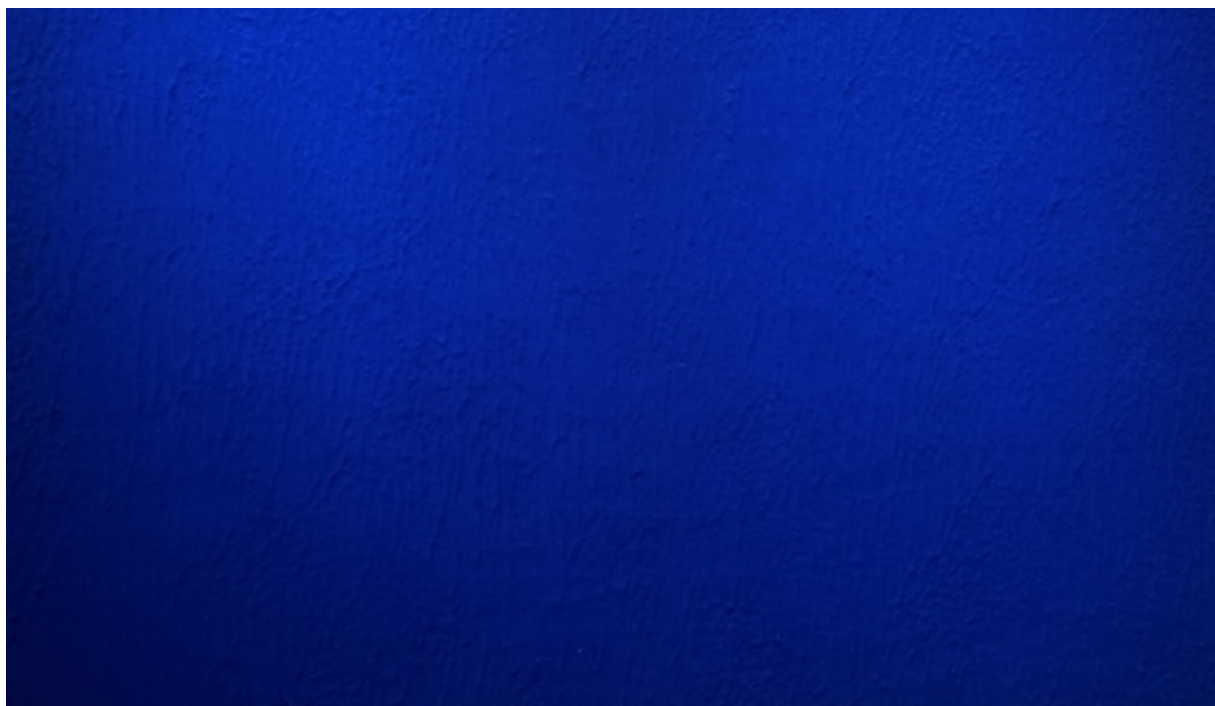
Basel Exclusive

The most interesting addition this year was Basel Exclusive. It is a new initiative where galleries hold back a key work from all the online previews and advance sales, and unveil it for the first time only at the fair itself. Nothing circulated in advance, no screen, no PDF. You discover the work in the room, the way it used to be.

I love the thinking behind it. So much of collecting now happens on a phone before anyone sets foot in a fair, and something gets lost in that. Basel Exclusive brings back the surprise, the moment of standing in front of a work you have never seen and deciding, right there, that it matters. It puts the encounter in person back at the center, which is exactly where it belongs.

Yves Klein at Applicat-Prazan

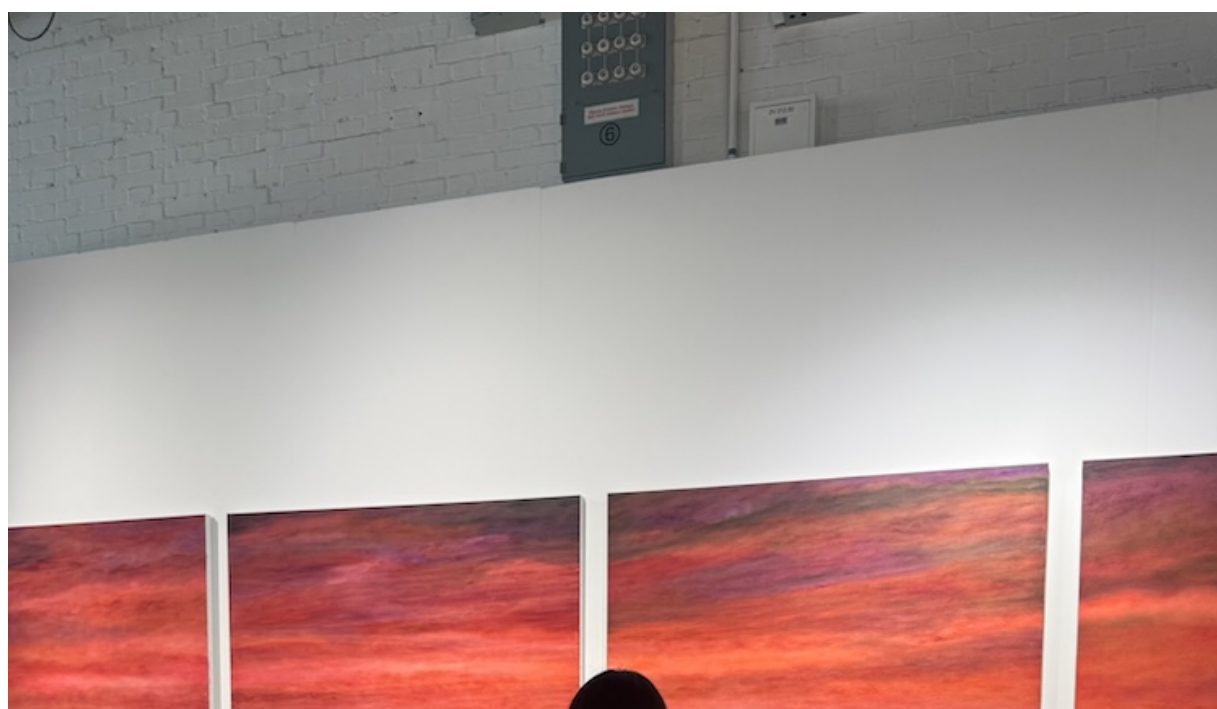




Yves Klein at Applicat Prazan.

Of everything held back, the Yves Klein stopped me cold. A small blue monochrome from 1958, and in person that deep Klein blue almost vibrates. No screen comes close. A Klein only makes sense when you are standing in front of it, which is the whole point of this initiative.

These were the works that stayed with me long after I left the halls. Basel always sharpens the eye, and this year, with Basel Exclusive in the mix, it also reminded me why nothing replaces being in the room.





Mila Dalal at Art Basel 2026.





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