

# LISTE

Art Fair  
Basel

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## Eliza Jordan interviewing Peter Bläuer (Director of LISTE) for Whitewall Magazine

-LISTE has now been in the art world for over two decades. What do you feel has changed the most since its inception?

PB: The world has gotten “smaller” – everything has begun moving closer together. As media becomes almost omnipresent on the planet, we can gain access to almost “all” available information about faraway and unknown parts of the world and their art. 23 years ago no one was talking about Chinese, South African or Peruvian galleries. Today all of the continents are crowding into the Western market and vice versa. It’s no surprise then that “new” countries are represented at LISTE. But there is still a large “market” out there to be conquered.

-For your 2018 edition, are there any galleries or countries making their LISTE debut that you’re particularly excited about?

PB: El Apartamento, a gallery from Havana, represents the first time that Cuba will have a presence at LISTE. “Communist” countries are now thronging to capitalist markets – we’ve been seeing that with China for quite some time. In total, 32 countries will be represented at LISTE. (In 1996, the number was 12.) It is very important to us that our galleries do not hail only from the world’s large art centers. Thus, we have cities like Lima, Cape Town, Vigo, Dubai, Cairo, Wellington, Bogota, Bucharest, Pristina, Glasgow, Modica, Beirut, Sao Paulo, Guatemala City, Tallinn and the like represented at LISTE. They are all very dedicated, exciting galleries that are serving their cities with important cultural work.

-Is there an on-the-rise medium or practice that you’re seeing more today than in the past?

PB: Before 2008 and prior to the economic crisis, most galleries were showing new media, e.g., video. Unfortunately, the crisis made things more “conservative”. Here a little exaggeration: painting, sculpture and more painting. We want to push back a bit on that. We have awarded a reduced stand price to galleries hosting outstanding projects. This prize was financed by the newly founded “Friends of LISTE”. As a result, we will increasingly encounter videos, sound and light installations, and performances at the stands.

-Two years ago, you told us that there are more and more artists working with new media (like the gallery KOW, Berlin, whose space was only video and film). Tell us about the role new media plays in this year's fair.

PB: As I just mentioned, we will again have more video works. I think it is important to introduce our new video and internet generation. But I also know that buyers have, unfortunately, also become more conservative and it has again become more difficult to sell video works. Fortunately for video, though, there are open-minded and specialized collectors and institutions.

-Art Basel started almost 50 years ago and was the second art fair in the world (behind Art Cologne in Germany just a year before), and it has a rich history that you've spoken about and admired. You mentioned that Basel had great directors who made great decisions, and that is why the fair was such a success, opposed to Cologne. What types of decisions are you making with LISTE to ensure its success has significance, and a rich history?

PB: To not be oriented toward „money“ and “what is fashionable”. To not get swept up in all the fancy trappings or what is actually more peripheral. There are fairs where I have the impression that all the side stuff, special guests and events are now more important than the galleries themselves. We're not naïve nor out of touch with what's out there. And we do react to trends. But!!! QUALITY has been and is our priority! That's also why we are so small. We don't introduce 150 galleries (that would be great for our bank account!!). No – 79 at that size we can maintain the quality we want and improve.

-For those in town, what are some not-to-miss destinations outside of the fair?

PB: Art Basel.. smile – and there are also two charming fairs, developed by young, very dedicated people. The book fair in Kaserne and the photography fair at Volkshaus. And then we have our world-class museums in a city with a population of barely 200,000! I am proud of “my” city. Smile - For young contemporary art, there is the terrific Kunsthalle with, e.g., Willis Thompson, and Kunsthaus Baselland, featuring, e.g., Rochella Feinstein. But there are also smaller venues, like Salts in Birsfelden, featuring Rodrigo Hernandez. And you will find the Performance Project of LISTE, curated by Eva Birkenstock, in a variety of locations around the city. (see homepage)