

LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN

# ARTNEWS

## What Does a Gallery Bring for its First Time at Art Basel?

By Sarah Douglas | Posted 06/12/17 11:00 am



From left to right, Alma Luxembourg, Daniella Luxembourg, and Amalia Dayan. / LILLIAN BIRNBAUM/COURTESY LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN, NEW YORK

Dealers put their best foot forward at Art Basel, the world's most important fair for modern and contemporary art. Recently, the *Financial Times* reported that David Zwirner's booth

alone will contain some \$100 million worth of art (including a Sigmar Polke priced at \$10 million) and Mnuchin Gallery's booth will total around \$65 million. But bringing the best may be even more important for those dealers making their first appearance in the main section of the fair. This year, there are ten newcomers to the Galleries section, including Campoli Presti, Pilar Corrias, dépendance, Salon 94, Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, Canada, and Di Donna. *ARTnews* spoke with another newcomer, the secondary-market dealers Luxembourg & Dayan, to hear about the works they are bringing for their first time at the Galleries rodeo.



Domenico Gnoli, *Braid*, 1969, acrylic and sand on canvas. / ©2017 ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK, AND SIAE, ROME/ADAM REICH/COURTESY LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN, NEW YORK

Auction house veterans Daniella Luxembourg and Amalia Dayan, who run the New York-based gallery together, have in the past few years made two appearances in Art Basel's Features section of small booths for special projects, the first time with work by the late Italian painter Domenico Gnoli and the second time with work by the Greek Arte Povera artist Jannis Kounellis—one of the last presentations of Kounellis's work before he passed away earlier this year. But for Art Basel 2017, they are graduating to a full gallery booth, a big step for an operation like theirs. Art Basel, Dayan said, gives crucial exposure to the artworks and the gallery. "Fewer and fewer people are coming to the gallery to see shows," Dayan said. "When you have artworks [consigned to you] privately, you have to pick up the phone and call and make sure the five people who might be interested in the piece will come to the gallery to look at it. In Basel, you have four or five days when you have a large amount of the most significant players in the art world

under the same roof and ready and wanting to look at things."

Despite new collectors coming into the market from Asia and other regions, Luxembourg said, "the art community is not so big. These are the same people who go to New York for the auctions, to London for the auctions, to the Venice Biennale. You can show them in one place the best of each gallery, and it's very comfortable. It's a good service to your community, and to art."

So the two women have been especially discriminating about the artworks they are bringing to their booth, where prices range from \$600,000 to \$14 million. The biggest star

is Gnoli, an artist who has had a recent posthumous rise on the market but is still not so well-known to the wider world. A meticulously painted close-up view of braided hair, *Braid*, from 1969, is one of the Gnoli's last paintings. He showed it in a solo exhibition at New York's Sidney Janis Gallery in December 1969. Around that same time, Gnoli was diagnosed with cancer; he died in February 1970. The New York lawyer and Surrealism collector Harry Torczyner bought the work from Janis, along with another painting in the Janis show. He gave one painting to one of his daughters, and one to the other. One daughter sold hers, titled *Black Hair*, at Christie's London in February 2014, where it made Gnoli's current worldwide record auction price of \$12 million. The other is in Luxembourg & Dayan's booth.



Alberto Burri, *Combustione Plastica*, 1956, plastic and acrylic on canvas. / ©2017 ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK/COURTESY LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN, NEW YORK



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But the piece that will dominate Luxembourg & Dayan's booth space-wise is Pino Pascali's 5-foot-high, fifteen-foot-wide *Cannone 'Bella Ciao'* from 1965, one of only two canons by him in existence. Perspicacious and well-traveled art viewers may recall that the other (slightly larger) one, *Cannone semovente*, was in the Arsenale section of the 2013 Venice Biennale, on loan from the private collector who owns it. *Cannone 'Bella Ciao'* came up at auction at Christie's in Milan 12 years ago, emblazoning the front cover of the auction's catalogue and selling for \$2.4 million.

Of all the exclusively modern and contemporary art fairs in the world, Art Basel is the one where provenance matters the most. In the Luxembourg & Dayan booth, a piece by Alberto Burri is one of the only works that has been on the market relatively recently. But the other pieces, like the Gnoli—as well as a gray monochrome Gerhard Richter from 1974 and a Lucio Fontana punctured canvas—have been in private collections far longer. The Fontana, completed in 1962, comes from the family of the late Italian art critic, Guido Ballo, who bought it directly from the artist.

Coming off a New York auction season last month that made \$1.6 billion, Dayan said she feels the market—and her gallery—have been buoyed. At the auctions, “not everything sold for above the high estimates but works were guaranteed for huge amounts of money,” she said. “There are certain people that, for the last decade, before every auction, would say, ‘We are going to see a correction, an adjustment.’ I was shocked once again at how strong and vibrant the market felt during the auctions. We benefited from it as a gallery. The weeks around it were very good for us. We benefitted from the momentum.”

Art Basel's main section opens to select visitors tomorrow.