

Andrew Pulver, "Four must-see exhibitions during Art Basel," *The Art Newspaper*, June 10, 2024



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Four must-see exhibitions during Art Basel

From Precious Okoyomon's nightmarish animatronic bear to a global survey of Black figurative painting, sci-fi chairs and Dan Flavin



Grizzly stuff: Precious Okoyomon's installation the sun eats her children is a terrifying combination of poisonous plants and a creepy animatronic bear, which periodically screams. The bear is "trapped in the nightmare", the artist says

Photo: Stefan Bohrer, © Precious Okoyomon

Summer Exhibition

Fondation Beyeler, Riehen, until 11 August

The Fondation Beyeler's summer show this year is something a bit different, even for this temple of European Modernism. The entire gallery and gardens have been taken over by a group of contemporary artists whose conceptual pitch for the show is "a living organism that changes and transforms". In other words, it is a show that is not fixed and static in the traditional way, but continually being altered through its run—whether an amorphous fog sculpture or growing plant-based exhibits, or the pictures being moved from one room to another.

The show's concept was the product of a kind of artistic steering group that included the Beyeler's director Sam Keller, and the artists Philippe Parreno, Tino Sehgal and Precious Okoyomon. Okoyomon explains that it stemmed from a desire to allow artists to both control the content and to reflect the nature of the artistic process. "It feels like it flowed from a very natural organic pollination of, first of all, bringing artists together into the curatorial process, and then all of us thinking about the natural pollination of: how do you make a show? And kind of unmake it together."

The group came together in a kind of self-selecting manner, and included practitioners from other disciplines. The neuroscientist and dream researcher Adam Haar, for example, collaborates with Carsten Höller on a piece called Dreaming of Flying With Flying Fly Agarics, for which visitors can take a nap on a "robotic bed". Elsewhere, the philosopher Federico Campagna and the architect Frida Escobedo have worked together on A Library as Big as a World, a book collection designed in the shape of a garden.

Okoyomon's contribution to the show very much adheres to the point. Her piece the sun eats her children is a garden of poisonous plants, with the addition of a stuffed animatronic bear that periodically lets out a scream of horror. Completing the work are butterflies, who go through their full life-cycle inside the garden. "I work with plants a lot," Okoyomon says, "and this is a great planting, a really tough, thick garden. If you were to eat anything of what I've planted, you would have visions for days. And once it gets hot in there, it creates a certain smell that could get you a little high."

All this ensures that no two experiences of the show will be the same. "What's interesting," Okoyomon says, "is that you get to move with it and watch it grow and change. It's a real entanglement process." A.P.