

This Is Why Switzerland Is the Most Exciting Art-Centric Destination Right Now

From St. Moritz and Gstaad to Basel and Bern, artists and those who love them are hitting the Alps this season

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Photo: Fabrice Coffrini / Getty Images

Although St. Moritz, Gstaad, and other Alpine slopes have long lured ski enthusiasts, there's yet another lofty reason to head to Switzerland this season. The country is packed with not-to-miss art museums and galleries. For those who can't hop a jet soon, armchair travelers who love art should also take note.

In Gstaad, *Gagosian* has installed the Arte Povera artist Giuseppe Penone's iconic *Idee di Pietra*, comprising two towering bronze tree sculptures right next to the chic *Hotel Le Grand Chalet*. Telling of its importance, there's even a site-specific one at the newly opened Louvre Abu Dhabi. Meanwhile, the gallery's *Geneva outpost* is preparing to mount a Penone exhibition as well, and both the show as well as the installation are on view until March.



Gagosian Gallery's installation of Giuseppe Penone's *Idee di Pietra* in Gstaad.

Photo: Marcus Veith / Work by Giuseppe Penone / Courtesy of Gagosian

For such a relatively small town, St. Moritz is chock-a-block with major-league galleries. The Vito Schnabel Gallery is currently featuring “Dan Flavin, to Lucie Rie and Hans Coper, master potters,” which happens to be the first exhibition ever to present their oeuvre together. Flavin collected the work of Rie and Coper, two radical ceramic artists, and the examples on view are from his own personal collection, along with sculptures he made in tribute to them. The show features 18 light works and 15 ceramic works.



“Dan Flavin, to Lucie Rie and Hans Coper, master potters” at the Vito Schnabel Gallery in St. Moritz.

Photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography Zürich / Courtesy of Vito Schnabel Gallery

“It has always been a dream for me to show Dan Flavin’s work. I was exposed to it at a pretty early age, when I was around 10 or 11 years old,” says Schnabel. “So the opportunity to now work with the Flavin estate is a true honor.”



Galerie Gmurzynska St. Moritz's Diana Widmaier Picasso and Yves Klein exhibition.

Photo: Courtesy of Galerie Gmurzynska

Galerie Gmurzynska, which boasts four galleries, is a longtime stalwart of Art Basel and Art Basel Miami Beach, as well as TEFAF both here and in Holland. Now on view in St. Moritz is the work of Diana Widmaier Picasso as well as Yves Klein, and their Zurich gallery happens to be the last interior exhibition architecture designed by the late architect Zaha Hadid.



Galerie Gmurzynska Zurich's gallery interior designed by Zaha Hadid.

Photo: CarloVannini / Courtesy of Galerie Gmurzynska Zurich

The *Cologne Galerie Karsten Greve* was a pioneer in the St. Moritz gallery scene. “When I opened in San Moritz, we were the first international gallery there,” says Greve. “Now it is still one of the most beautiful mountain areas in the world but a destination for an ever-growing number of collectors.” Check out their *current show* comprising masterworks by Cy Twombly, John Chamberlain, and Joel Shapiro.



The Cologne Galerie Karsten Greve in St. Moritz.

Photo: Courtesy of Cologne Galerie Karsten Greve

There's even a veritable artwork on the move through the Swiss Alps; Sarah Morris has emblazoned an entire railway train with her signature bold graphic designs.



Sarah Morris train artwork.

Photo: © Sarah Morris / Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York

Virtually everyone who treks over to Art Basel knows about the storied Fondation Beyeler. Yes, the Renzo Piano building is a stunner, but what's inside is also tip-top. A major Baselitz show opens on January 21, but check out their permanent collection, too. There's a bevy of masterpieces by Henri Rousseau, Richard Serra, and Gerhard Richter.

Another iconic Renzo Piano–designed museum is the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern, currently featuring “Klee in Wartime.” On hand are a staggering 4,000 works.

Then the Karma gallery in Zurich has just expanded and Surrealist fans are in for a treat, as Swiss artist Méret Oppenheim takes center stage. No less than the London and Zurich–based Caruso St John architectural firm, which designed the Tate Britain, Millbank, has transformed the Karma gallery.



Kunsthaus Zürich's Impressionist collection includes works by Monet and Rodin.

Photo: Courtesy of Kunsthaus Zürich

The *Kunsthaus Zürich*, the city's modern-art museum, boasts a staggering 150 sculptures and 20 paintings by Alberto Giacometti. Plus, the ahead-of-the-curve museum has been collecting video art since 1979. Switzerland's oldest museum, the *Kunstmuseum Bern*, includes a permanent collection boasting first-rate works by Paul Klee and Pablo Picasso.

If ever there were a good time to head for the hills, it's now.