


7 of the Best Works at Art Basel, From an \$18.5 Million Portrait of Giacometti's Mistress to a White-Hot Painting by a New Market Star

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It's spargelzeit in Switzerland, and that means that precious white asparagus is on the menu and that even more precious artworks are decking the halls of Basel's Messeplatz, where this year's edition of the world's premiere blue-chip art fair is back for its 49th year. Here are some of the most exciting works on view at Art Basel.

Robert Indiana

***Rum Run* (c. 1975–c. 2005)**

Galerie Gmurzynska – Zürich

Price: \$600,000



Since his death last year at age 89, the Robert Indiana myth has at long last expanded in the public imagination beyond his proto-viral *LOVE* sculpture to encompass the messy but certainly more interesting aspects of his work and life. For one thing, the sordid battles over his estate—waged by a seemingly piratical crew of people who ingratiated themselves with the aging artist and, among other things, began churning out cynically commercial versions of his signature work—have proven captivating. His ramshackle home in Vinalhaven, Maine, where he moved in 1978 and lived for the rest of his life, filling the former Odd Fellows meetinghouse with his art and eccentric finds (including lots of oversized stuffed animals), has also gained celebrity, and potentially will become a museum.

This arresting sculpture, shown at Galerie Gmurzynska's booth at the fair, was one of the many artworks that gathered dust over years at Indiana's island compound. Begun in 1975 but only finished around 2005, it contains the hallmarks of the artist's controlled early sculptures made when he was living in New York's artist hub Coenties Slip: the wooden base, for instance, is stenciled with the words "Rum Run," stirrings of the textual play that would lead to *Love*. But it gets appealingly weirder from there. The skeletal captain wears an old uniform from the Odd Fellows fraternity, paired with glasses that Indiana claims were the architect Philip Johnson's; one toe has purple nail polish. The skiff itself, the only boat the artist ever owned (despite moving to the seaside, he never took to sailing), is painted gold—another link to his early work, which often contained the grand color. The title, meanwhile, is taken from an artwork that Indiana made as a child and kept.

The unexpected strangeness of the sculpture, so far removed from the sanitized work that both made the artist famous and confined his reputation during his life, is its chief appeal. Sold at the fair, it is now headed to a museum in Asia, where it will be displayed alongside a meditative work by Nam June Paik.