

Art Basel: a dose of reality with exhibits on snooping and migration

Samson Young and Chiharu Shiota among artists whose works bring global political turmoil to art market's top event

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From mass surveillance to the migration crisis, anxiety about a world in political turmoil permeated this year's [Art Basel](#), the world's largest contemporary and modern art fair in Switzerland.

Dressed in a police uniform, Hong Kong artist Samson Young mounted a “non-lethal” sonic cannon - usually used to disperse protesters - [to shoot the calls of distressed birds](#) above the well-heeled crowds, in a work that references the history of migration from Vietnam and mainland China to the former British colony.

“These are very dynamic times,” said Art Basel director [Marc Spiegler](#) ahead of the fair's public opening. “We have major political elections coming up. We have major referenda coming up. We have mass migration in Europe. We have economic uncertainties. From an artistic standpoint [this] creates a lot of material for artists to work with. Interesting times make for interesting art.”