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Globus and Fondation Beyeler Announce Public Art Project: Urs Fischer, «Skinny Sunrise»

13 June – 27 July 2025, Market Square, Basel



For the third edition of the “Globus Public Art Project”, Los Angeles-based Swiss artist Urs Fischer intervenes on the Globus department store’s construction façade as well as in several nearby locations, from the city’s historical Marktplatz to the so-called “Totehüsli”, an ossuary that was once attached to a church. For this project, Urs Fischer, internationally celebrated for the intricacy and wit of his provocative sculptures and installations, takes inspiration from Basel’s medieval “Totentanz (Dance of Death)”, an iconographic symbol of the inescapability of death and its ubiquity in life itself. Fischer’s works take up this set of motifs, transposing them into a contemporary artistic language, which confronts viewers with their own finitude. They include a self-portrait made of candle wax, skeleton sculptures inspired by art history and contemporary imagery, as well as a new production for the department store’s façade.

As part of the three-year renovation of its iconic department store on Basel’s Marktplatz, Globus, in collaboration with the Fondation Beyeler, is inviting artists to create new site-specific artworks that engage with both the building and the public. Following the two projects with Claudia Comte and Julian Charrière in the past two years, the project with Urs Fischer marks the crowning finale of the series.

Urs Fischer (*1973, Zurich; lives and works in Los Angeles) is recognised worldwide for his astute sculptures and installations, which are often imbued with absurd humour and irreverence. His artistic language thematically revolves around transience, physical decay and the unsettling coexistence of sublimity and decay.

Among his most iconic motifs is the skeleton—reimagined not as a solemn reminder of mortality, but as a lively, ironic character in a broader meditation on vanitas. These skeletal figures, often drawn from both art history and contemporary visual culture, take on anthropomorphic qualities: they smoke, juggle objects, or stumble about with awkward charm. Through these gestures, Fischer turns philosophical reflection into something tactile and playfully disarming—though never without an underlying sense of disquiet.

True to his experimental approach, Fischer's sculptural works are rarely static. Many are cast in wax, others look brittle but are cast in bronze; the first designed to disintegrate gradually when set alight - the latter to suggest fragility but instead embrace eternal life. In celebrating both elements, ephemerality and haphazardly solid shapes but portraying decay, he challenges the classical notion of sculpture as enduring form, instead proposing an art that mirrors the fleeting nature of existence. The skeletons become more than symbols—they operate as dynamic tools for exploring the cycles of life, death, and artistic creation.

The exhibition project is curated by Basel-based curator Samuel Leuenberger and this year spans three locations around Globus in Basel. On the market square itself, the artist presents the bronze sculpture *Invisible Mother*, 2015, a fountain with a reclining skeleton through which water sprays from a garden hose - a closed cycle that flows on endlessly and reflects the absurdity and constancy of life itself.

On the Globus façade, Fischer is showing the new production *Eternity*, 2023, a large-format billboard perched high above street level featuring a juxtaposition of eras: a still from a 1940s film noir superimposed with a strip of bacon—a surreal, humorous clash that blurs nostalgia with digital archive images.

In the so-called “Totenhüsi” on Münsterhügel, an ossuary that used to belong to St Martin’s Church and is now part of Globus and used as a temporary off-space, Fischer is showing his well-known self-portrait made of candle wax, *Untitled*, 2011, which depicts him sitting at a table. After being lit, the self-portrait (sculpture) slowly melts away, emphasising the themes of dissolution and the passing of time. The intimate presentation in the former ossuary is complemented by other well-known works by Fischer from renowned international art collections: *Undigested Sunset*, 2001-2002, *Violent Cappuccino*, 2007 and *Mildew & Dew*, 2022.

Opening hours:

“Totenhüsi”, Martinskirchplatz: 13–22 June (during Art Basel): daily 10am–8pm; 23 June–27 July: Friday–Sunday, 10am–7pm

Website Globus: [Public Art Project | Globus | Fondation Beyeler](#)

Website Fondation Beyeler: [Globus Public Art Project 2025](#)

Artist Talk with Urs Fischer

On Friday, 20 June, from 6 to 7 pm, Urs Fischer will talk to curator Samuel Leuenberger about his artistic practice. The talk will take place at the Fondation Beyeler and will be held in English. Admission: CHF 25 / The museum visit is included in the event ticket. Places are limited.

About Urs Fischer

Born in Zurich in 1973, Urs Fischer now lives and works in Los Angeles. His works have been shown in solo exhibitions at the Kunsthaus Zürich, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, the New Museum in New York and at the Whitney Biennial, among others.

About Globus

For almost 130 years, Globus department stores have been delighting their customers with an exquisite and high-quality range of goods in nine department stores and their online channel. The range is complemented by the incomparable service for which Globus and its approximately 1,800 employees are known. Globus has been present in Basel since 1907.

About Fondation Beyeler

The museum in Riehen near Basel is internationally renowned for its high-calibre museum exhibitions and public art projects, its outstanding collection of modern and contemporary art, as well as its ambitious schedule of events. The museum building was designed by Renzo Piano in the idyllic setting of a park with venerable trees and water lily ponds. It boasts a unique location in the heart of a local recreation area, looking out onto fields, pastures and vineyards close to the foothills of the Black Forest. In collaboration with Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, the Fondation Beyeler is constructing a new museum building in the adjoining park, thus further enhancing the harmonious interplay of art, architecture and nature.

Image: Urs Fischer, *Eternity*, 2023, Aluminum panel, aluminum honeycomb, polyurethane adhesive, epoxy primer, gesso, solvent-based screen printing paint, water-based screen printing paint, 182,9 x 243,8 x 2,2 cm, private collection © Urs Fischer. Courtesy of the artist; Foto: Stefan Altenburger

Press images are available at www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/media/press-images

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