

Tanya Leighton

artnet news

10 of the Best Artworks at Art Basel 2023,  
From New Provocations by Anne Imhof to a  
Bravura \$22 Million de Kooning

These are the booths that caught the eye of Artnet News's editor-in-chief.

**Andrew Goldstein**, June 15, 2023



*Portrait of the Artist's Son II (2023)*  
Tanya Leighton

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Kurfürstenstraße 156, 10785 Berlin  
+49 (0)30 21 972 220, [info@tanyaleighton.com](mailto:info@tanyaleighton.com), [www.tanyaleighton.com](http://www.tanyaleighton.com)

## Oliver Osborne

In the chockablock booths of Art Basel are always mini Ali Baba's caves, treasures tastefully heaped upon treasures, only with those fineries sometimes taking the form of a poke in the eye or a punch in the gut. This year, however, shocks and innovations are less prominent—the knob has been dialed down to, let's say, a seven—as galleries tend to their bottom line, serving up comfort food to skittish collectors. There's plenty to feast on, of course, and you'll be hard-pressed to find a higher-quality fair this year. Here are some standouts.

For 10 years, the Scottish-born, Berlin-based artist Oliver Osborne devoted himself to taking photographs of rubber plants, digitally reshaping their composition, and making classically perfect paintings of the result. The purpose? To explore what approaches, what compositions, can make a painting of something ageless—a potted plant—look essentially *of its time*. In recent years, he has begun incorporating figures from art-historical paintings into these settings. Then, one day, looking at Cézanne's portrait of his son, his thoughts on timeliness took a twist: what is more eternal yet more in-the-moment than a painting of a child?

This, more or less, is the backstory that yielded up this exquisite portrait Osborne made of his own young son, Alfie, and it will stop you in your tracks. Painted in red on a textured surface of herringbone linen—with two of those rubber-plant leaves lingering around in the foreground—it could be a Chardin or it could be an iPhone snapshot taken at home this morning. This level of portraiture is always relevant; the Berlin-based gallery said it sold in a snap for €25,000, and they could have sold 10 more.