

Berardini, Andrew, "Obstacle Course with Occasional Clowns: Kathryn Andrews at Art Parcours, Art Basel,"
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ARTslant

**Obstacle Course with Occasional Clowns:
Kathryn Andrews at Art Parcours, Art Basel**
by Andrew Berardini



Art Basel this year has something called Art Parcours Night. It's not *de rigeur* to admit aloud that you don't know something, but I had to look up the definition of "parcours." I asked my good friend/slave-driving nemesis -the Internet- and according to wikipedia, a "parcours" is "a physical discipline and non-competitive sport which focuses on efficient movement around obstacles."

In other words, a working definition of an art fair. Some conjecture/complain/lament, that the modern art fair experience is one that requires *physical discipline*, although I'm not entirely sure if art fair-going wholly qualifies as a *non-competitive sport*, but I suppose that depends on the individual. Perhaps the Art Parcours Night is the part of the fair that's just for practice, not for sale as it were. Will this year's Art Parcours require *efficient movement around obstacles*? I believe, in a weird way, it will.

More than the mystery of "parcours," what got me curious about the whole affair was the last line of the standard boilerplate that the art fair posted on its website about the

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artist Kathryn Andrews' installation/performance/obstacle course:

"Andrews examines how Performance art in the context of art fairs has become a sideshow and perhaps an uneasy form of entertainment."

Performance art at art fairs is an uneasy entertainment. It's generally understood, that unless one has to attend, art fairs are bad for artists. It can reduce a lifetime of dreams and sweat into a simple compare & contrast event, a numerical price. If something from one artist sells for a thousand euros and that shiny bauble over there sells for a million, is the one thousand dollar artwork worth only .1% of the million dollar artwork? To some, yes. To me, well, I might have just swallowed some vomit. But that's the way the markets work, the cookie crumbles, and so forth, I guess.

Nevertheless, Kathryn Andrews, with vaudeville and generic-ish backdrops next to the Rhine, has created a set of performances which in theory will make people uneasy about what they're doing, and yes, there will be at least one clown.

A spectacle with five stage sets, each with a seductive vaudevillian performance, each beginning as another ends, forcing the viewers to throng back and forth to catch them all. Vaudeville is a set of relatively easy gags, but by thinking about them a little, Andrews is almost telling us that popular entertainment can be a decent seduction so long as we think a little bit about what we're jumping into. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't jump. It is likely to be performed with enough weird grace to make the whole thing pleasurable whether we think so or not, but Andrews doesn't disregard the power of thought, or of course the allure of a good obstacle course.

—Andrew Berardini

(Image on top right: **Kathryn Andrews**, *Rainbow Successor*, 2011, stainless steel, rented costume, 73 x 51 3/4 x 48 inches (185.4 x 131.4 x 121.9 cm); Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA. Photography: Brian Forrest.)

Art Parcours Night

Features a special evening extravaganza conceived by L.A. based artist Kathryn Andrews including including creepy clowns, elastic acrobats, thundering musicians, clumsy jugglers, mysterious magicians and extended opening hours for all Art Parcours sites.

Wednesday, June 13, 8pm – 12 midnight

St. Johann Rheinweg, Basel and Art Parcours locations

Open to public, free of charge, bars and food vendors on-site