

THE SPACES

High culture: a guide to art in the Alps

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December 13, 2016



James Turrell 'Skyspace, Piz Uter' at Hotel Castell in Zuoz. Photography: courtesy of OAP

Europe's highest altitudes have opened up to art. Skiing now comes with a serious side helping of culture, as the alpine peaks host a flourishing selection of festivals, foundations, museums and galleries.

While the streets of rarefied resorts have long hosted blue-chip commercial galleries, today you can also find the high-minded, experimental and cutting edge, thanks to annual events such as the Engadin Art Talks: a reminder of the status of Swiss curators and collectors on the international scene. There are also some exciting institutions in the offing: Grazyna Kulczyk's Muzeum Susch is tipped to open in 2018, and sculptor Not Vital has recently purchased the ancient Tarasp Castle in Scuol with the aim of turning it into a cultural attraction. The days of alpine art being synonymous with chocolate box landscapes and J.M.W. Turner are a distant memory.

Maximise time off the slopes with our guide to art in the Alps.

St Moritz lists 13 commercial art galleries - about 13 more than one would usually find in a town with a population of 5,000. The surrounding Engadin Alps are likewise home to an extraordinary concentration of art events and organisations. For our guide to art in the Alps, we've picked out four destinations to visit:

The venerable Galerie Gmurzynska also has outposts in Zug and Zurich, and opened its St Moritz gallery in 2003. The gallery specialises in the work of the Russian avant-garde, as well as modern and contemporary art. Next up is an exhibition of artist-designed jewellery by Greek sculptor Sophia Vari, opening 29 December.

Vito Schnabel's St Moritz outpost shares an active programme with his New York Gallery, showing contemporary blue chip artists (Warhol, Basquiat, Sterling Ruby, papa Schnabel) and established members of the anti-establishment (Harmony Korine...). The gallery is squeezing three shows into this skiing season, kicking off with Jeff Elrod (29 Dec - 22 Jan) and finishing up with Sterling Ruby (12 March-16 April).

Cologne-based Galerie Karsten Greve has a solid background in the post-war European avant-garde. Its St Moritz gallery, which opened in 1999, plays host to Accrochage this season, featuring an all-star roster.

A mix of Old Masters and modern works (notably Arte Povera) ensures an interesting program at the Italian Robilant + Voena gallery. Its St Moritz season opener brings together the best of both worlds in Da Taddeo Gaddi A Lucio Fontana (through 8 January), which pits the medieval master against the canvas-slashing Spatialist.