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Swizz Beatz Talks Collecting & Loving Art Ahead of Latest 'No Commissions' Art Basel Show

By Nicole Pajer, December 6, 2017.

Swizz Beatz may be known for constructing hits for some of the biggest names in the biz (Whitney Houston, Chris Brown, JAY-Z), but the hip-hop recording artist is also an avid art fanatic.

In 2015, the Grammy-winning producer teamed up with Bacardi to debut a three-day art show titled *No Commissions* at Miami's annual Art Basel. The idea, according to Swizz, was to give artists a chance to sell their work and take home 100 percent of the proceeds, as opposed to turning over a hefty commission to a gallery space. Following the show's success, Swizz and his team took the concept around the world, making stops in London, Shanghai and New York. This weekend, the producer is bringing *No Commissions* back to Art Basel at Soho Studios from Thursday to Saturday.

Swizz isn't the only rapper who appreciates a well-oiled canvas. The 39-year-old tells *Billboard* that several of his colleagues, including Nas and Beyoncé, have followed in his footsteps and are becoming art aficionados. "People used to laugh at me for collecting art, and now it's the thing to do," he reveals.

Billboard caught up with Swizz to discuss his transition into art curation, plans to release a new "serious" album in 2018, and how life has changed since he graduated from Harvard in November.

What are some of your favorite pieces in your collection?

My studio is basically an art gallery and I have a lot of piece I there that I love. I have a Michael Vasquez and that's a piece that everybody loves to take photos in front of. I have a Lyle Owerko. He was the photographer that took the Time Magazine cover when the Twin Towers got hit. He also did the Boom Box photography that I've got hanging up in there. I've got a Jonathan Mannion original Biggie photograph, a Dustin Yellin glass sculpture. Zio Ziegler is amazing artist and I have a huge piece from him in there, Damien Hirst. There are a lot of pieces in there. But that is a rundown of some of my favorites.

I think the most expensive piece in my collection now is probably a [Jean-Michel] Basquiat. He is the highest selling artist right now, African American. But I collect all living artists right now. That's my thing. I'd like artists to be able to smell their roses while they are here, use their money to invest back into themselves and then give the world more greatness. I've been encouraging people to support living artists so they can enjoy this now. It shouldn't be like oh when that person is not here we want to be into the person. That's backwards as hell!