

# The New Criterion

## Art

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### The Maastricht fair

by [Marco Grassi](#)

*On the world's preeminent art fair.*

A long, thin sliver of Holland extends southwards, squeezed between Belgium and Germany. At its center, minutes from Aachen, is the town of Maastricht, population of 125,000. Declaring itself with some justification the oldest urban enclave in the Netherlands, it was, to the Romans, *Mosae Trajectum* (“Maas Crossing”). Strategically straddling the river Maas, the town has experienced an astonishing total of nineteen sieges—by Austria, Spain, and France—all in the course of the religious and territorial disputes that marked the transformation of the medieval Duchy of Brabant into the modern United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Despite this turbulent history, the industrious townfolk of Maastricht managed to build two splendid Romanesque basilicas and to maintain a thriving textile and ceramics industry. Art, however, seems always to have remained a marginal pursuit, certainly in comparison to the privileged ...

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