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## Notes From Art Basel, Miami Beach - Steven Psyllos

### Art Basel: Day One

Wednesday was the VIP and Press Preview for the largest art fair in the US and I arrived directly from the airport—luggage in hand, badly in need of a shower—to help man our magazine booth. NY Arts is giving away a few thousand copies of the November/December issue to attendees of Art Basel Miami Beach, making new friends you might say.

Initial impression: Business, business, business. All the local presses are reporting on the extreme hike in the Miami hotel rates and the corporate posturing surrounding the arts-related events saturating South Beach this long weekend. The VIPs gathered in their formal attire: gentlemen in their luxe suits, ladies in their evening gowns—even in the afternoon heat. (Speaking of ladies, silicone is still very much in style down here in Miami.) Coffee at Art Basel Miami Beach: \$5. Kinda hard on us editors and journalists.

But you can't blame a snake for eventually biting you, can you? It's its nature. Art fairs on this scale are—duh—focused on collectors, not art-lovers. So, what am I to do? Seek out what is new and unseen, those hidden gems from galleries, both known and unknown, that are here on display. So, let the games begin.

A quick list: LOVED Mikhael Subotzky's photography at Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg. Loved David Shrigley's wall of drawings at Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen. Loved Katrin Sigurdardottir's installation at i8 Gallery, Reykjavik. But I'll go into greater depths at a later date; when I'm not sitting in an overpriced hotel room, being charged for my time online.

Agenda for Thursday: "Skywalkers" by FriendsWithYou, a parade down the SoBe shoreline featuring 12 blimps designed by FriendsWithYou, David Choe, Ara Peterson, Misaki Kawai, PaperRad, Devil Robots, Mumble Boy and good ol' Gary Baseman. Then, it's off to the opening of Bridge Art Fair and —scope. These two fairs have a promising lineup of galleries listed this year, and I'm sure to enjoy.

Tomorrow I'll do Pulse, Aqua, Flow...Gotta plan it all out. With this amount of work and events, you can't do it all in a day. You must pace yourself or you'll get brain-freeze, which is rather unpleasant, I must say.

### Interview with Peter Vetsch, Art Basel Communications Manager

**Steven Psyllos: What is the role of the press in a large-scale art fair such as Art Basel Miami Beach?**

Peter Vetsch: The role of the media is very important. I was just interviewed by a Latin American TV News program and they asked me a half-hour worth of questions, where normally it was a few less important quotes they were looking for.

With international and local media, they let the world know about us, and it also lets the inner circle of art professionals feel good, as they are a part of something great.

**SP: What would you like to see improve about the press coverage of this event?**

PV: I wish they wouldn't only focus on what was the record number for a work that was sold. They shouldn't only point out prices because they make people believe that art is only for the rich. I would like to see it go the other way.

To come to Art Basel Miami Beach, to see the quality of work here, you would have to travel the world and back again. We have the best galleries here from across the globe.

Five years ago we surveyed our exhibitors to find out how much work was for sale below the \$5000 mark. The response was very impressive. We found out that it was 27%. So we created this system of yellow dots that would show that these specific works are not as costly as would be perceived.

Today the price of art has climbed drastically, so you will not see as many dots.

### Interview with Nicolai Gerner-Mathisen of C/O Gallery, Berlin

**SP: How important is the media's role in spreading the word about art fairs such as Art Basel Miami Beach?**

Nicolai Gerner-Mathisen: Media is very important. People read through Artforum or other magazines and find out what artists we represent are able to see what we're about from other countries.

**SP: How can the media improve its coverage of Art Basel Miami Beach? For example does the media focus too much on the prices of the works?**

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David Rankin

NGM: People always focus on money, that is what interests them. If you want to read about art, you buy an art magazine.

**SP: What is the most positive aspect of this fair for a gallerist?**

NGM: Being involved in Basel, or art fairs in general, is the most important part of our business. It is very attractive to the artists because Miami attracts the world's most important collectors. It is a matter of prestige.

### Interview with Barbara Thumm of Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin

**SP: Why is being at Art Basel Miami so important for a gallerist?**

BT: Being involved is very important because I have a lot of collectors from the States, and many from South America as well. Miami is perfect because it solidifies my connection to those North and South American buyers.

**SP: What is your reaction to the coverage of the fair by the media?**

BT: It's all gossip. This art fair is about business. It is a marketplace. Art fairs are just a hype thing. We sold out in the first hour here. What do we do after that? My focus is the activity that happens in my gallery space back home.

### Interview with Florence Bonnefous of Air De Paris

**SP: How important is the media coverage of the event?**

FB: It is important for the art fair and the galleries, but it is also important for the newspapers. Now they some nice subjects to fill their columns with.

**SP: How can the press coverage improve?**

FB: This is an impossible task. The art fair gives a broader vision of art, but here the business matters are more important than aesthetics.

It is a marketplace but I like to do interesting projects within the core of the business. The artist gets good attention so I try to balance out which artist I take to what fair.

**SP: Best part about Art Basel Miami Beach?**

FB: The weather!

Top Ten Miami Beach - Gae Savannah

- 1) Grendel space--curated by Dam,Stuhltrager, Jack the Pelican, and Rupert Ravens. Ethnically charged ritualistic 'Memorial Poles' by James Brown. Tar-like black smeared over magenta fur paintings by German Pitre. Glowing blue and red cyber creature by Mark Esper, and elusive lacy wood spinning disks, feathers, and video installation by Derek Larson.
- 2) The beaver house sculptures by Japanese artist Shintaro Miyake at Art Basel; (Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo;) and meeting Pepe Alvarez who collects Miyaki's work.
- 3) The sumptuous encrusted mica reliefs of Jose Alvarez at Aqua. (Western Projects.)
- 4) David McDonald's wood sculpture with medley of milky yellows at Aqua. (Traywick Contemporary.)
- 5) Thai soup and (whatever kind of) salad in the Net Jet VIP lounge at Art Basel with Renee Vara, Moran Bar-Kochva of the Contemporaries, and Andrew Gristina of Travelers Insurance.
- 6) white trash contemporary's booth at -scope. Renegade dealer Nils Grossien trashed the staid commercial art fair mode with novel, garishly patterned confections by Michael Dörner, Oliver Ross and others.
- 7) The materially witty shifting sculpture by Stefan Löffelhardt at Art Basel. (Aurel Scheibler Gallery.)
- 8) The lavish brunch by the pool at the Sagamore and catching up with Florence Lynch, Louky of LMAK Projects, Miami Today editor, Carmen Betancourt-Lewis, Miami art consultant Stella Holmes, and British writer Jean Wainwright.
- 9) D. Dominick Lombardi's graphic pattern drawings at Aqua, (Lisa Boyle Gallery) and intriguing tattoo-based works at -scope (Kasia Kay.)
- 10) Transparent aqua striped Thomas Zizwitz painting at Pulse. (Richard Levy Gallery.)

## List of top art - Ed Rubin

Art aside, Art Basel Miami is all about seeing and being seen, spending time with old friends and new friends and networking like crazy. I went to the fair with my friend, sculptor Carole Feuerman. We were attached at the hip much of the time. However, since our agendas were different, we managed to have some healthy and happy times apart, doing our own thing, so to speak. Although the entire scene can be thought of as one big happening, I managed to ferret out, in no particular order, my Miami highlights. To keep it to 10, I eliminated SVA (School of Visual Arts) alumni party at the beach at which I had drinks with my friend, sculptor Fred Eversley, seeing two of my favorite gallerists at Aqua, Jane Hart (Miami) and Cynthia Broan (NYC) and visiting the Ruth and Richard Shack's stellar art collection.

- 1) Supper with Carole and Jonathan Greenberg Vice President Arcade Fine Arts, Sotheby's at The Blue Room at The Delano Hotel.
- 2) Supper at Tulula's with Julie Sasse, Chief Curator/Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson artist Barbara Rogers, San Francisco gallery owner Scott Richard and his wife and Carole and her son Craig and Heidi, his soon to be wife.
- 3) Drinks with Berlin artist-performers Eva and Adele, Carole and Billie Milam Weisman in the UBS VIP Lounge. Supper on the beach at the UBS Platinum VIP tent at the Delano.
- 4) Doing the all of the major Art Fairs with my friends David Rubin, Curator of the San Antonio Museum and Karin Giusti, Sculptor and head of the Sculptor Department of Brooklyn College and Carole.
- 5) Visiting with Nils Grossien at the White Trash Gallery at Scope and getting a telephone call from Nil's beautiful wife Ute Thon, Senior Editor at art - Das Kunstmagazin.
- 6) Meeting and talking with the very ebullient artist and writer Karen Wright (Bloomberg News and Art Papers) at the Flow Art Fair.
- 7) Talking and taking some pictures of the very beautiful and exciting London Gallerist Maureen Paley.
- 8) Meeting and spending time with Ms.Val Lyle a refreshingly pure and still untainted artist (sculptor) from Bristol Tennessee who gifted herself with a trip to Art Miami Basel.
- 9) Meeting two young venture capitalist art collectors in a multimillion dollar coop that overlooks the yacht club and listening to where they have been and where they are going; in short reliving their dreams.
- 10) Coming face to face with a particularly stunning Picasso sculpture at Basel Miami Art Fair. He still rules.

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## Fair List - Horace Brockington

- 1) Best Fairs:
  - a. Aqua. Was this a fair or continuous party? Great.
  - b. Pulse. Fun but serious art and serious collectors. Again, Pulse gets it right.
  - c. Pool. Strange, strange rooms.
- 2) Worst Fairs: No Contest, Bridge Art Fair (unfortunately, a lot of good art and galleries among a lot of trash).
- 3) Best Outside the Fair: Yvon Lambert Space was cool. Really low key with a nice video viewing room, a couch and table. Hyper cool.
- 4) Best Booth at Basel: It was in fact not a booth, but the work at Gavin Brown Enterprise, and the Kori Newirk installation.
- 5) Miami 's own: Lyle O'Reitzel Gallery exhibition.
- 6) Moments: People angling to get into parties in order to compare hotel pools and lobbies.
- 7) Best Inclusive Party and Sell Out: Jack Pierson Party at the Raleigh, great mix of people, despite the weather. And the bar! Plus, the book sold out.
- 8) Most Gracious Host: Marty Margolies.
- 9) Best Container: Ken Schacter's Zaha Hadid, as to be expected from Kenny.
- 11) Best Music: P.S.1's Thursday night DJ was great.
- 12) JayZ and Beyonce buying art at L&M Arts on Friday.
- 13) Everywhere: Kim Heriston.

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### Fair Favorites - Julia Cooke

- 1) The presence of punchy, political, contemporary Latin American artists/galleries in the multitude of different fairs.
- 2) Art Kabinett mini-exhibits inside of the "big fair."
- 3) The bemused looks on well-heeled collectors' faces as Peaches integrants chanted "shake your dick, shake your tits" (with appropriate upper- and lower-body vibrations) at Wednesday night's beachside concert.
- 4) Le Baron, in spite of horrendously offensive bouncers and lines.
- 5) The diffusion of the fair-going energy into the 13 well-attended ancillary fairs. One standout was Aqua, with its showing of funky, cool art and a more chilled-out crowd in attendance.
- 6) Raúl Cárdenas/Torolab's projects at Galería OMR's booth at ABMB.
- 7) Late-night karaoke at the divey basement bar Studio.
- 8) Saturday night's party at the Shore Club, given by BlackBook Magazine and the Whitney Museum with The Mishapes.
- 9) Blood for Art at -scope, where a pint of blood bought a print by one of 15 artists.
- 10) Zilvinas Kempinas' work at the Spencer Brownstone Gallery's booth at ABMB.

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### Best of the Best in Miami - Debra Anderson

- 1) Best Party: The Shore Club party with DJ Shepard Fairey, Camille Rose Garcia, Tim Biskup, Gary Baseman, to name just a few, were hanging out poolside.
- 2) Best Party Under the Radar: Swindle Magazine party at 460 Degrees Gallery on Thursday Night. A bit hard to find, but worth the excursion!
- 3) Best Installation: Adam Wallacavage's Octopus Chandelier installation at Bridge Art Fair, represented by Jonathan LeVine Gallery. Three of Adam's sublime sea monsters were on view in the lobby.
- 4) Locust Projects installation at -scope. A thought-provoking digital media and sculpture installation featuring a life-size mechanical honest Abe Lincoln!
- 5) Rubell Family Collection. Eclectic collection and installation rooms, amazing space.
- 6) Photo Miami. A cool warehouse gave this fair an edge, Foley Gallery's booth featured works by Sao Paulo artist Alexandre Orion, and with the booth painted by the artist.
- 7) Art Center of South Florida, "We'll Make a Lover of You" exhibition curated by Francesco Locastro (In conjunction with Jonathan LeVine Gallery, Merry Karnowsky Gallery, and the Shooting Gallery). An amazing, seminal exhibition featuring artists who have emerged from an underground art and culture.
- 8) Documentary preview – No Restraint – about Mathew Barney and Bjork for Drawing Restraint #9 at Colony Theatre

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### List of top artists - Stefania Carrozzini

- 1) Cornelia Parker, Frith Street Gallery
- 2) Brian Ulrich, Rhona Hoffman Gallery
- 3) Erwin Wurm, Galerie Aurel Scheibler
- 4) Paul Pfeiffer, The Project Gallery
- 5) Sabine Hornig, Galerie Barbara Thumm
- 6) Sam Taylor Wood, White Cube/Jay Jopling
- 7) Tony Oursler, Galerie Hans Mayer

- 8) Isaac Julien, Galería Helga de Alvear
- 9) Carmela Garcia, Juana de Aizpuru
- 10) Thomas Struth, Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle
- 11) Os Gemeos, Deitch Projects
- 12) Lorna Simpson, Sean Kelly
- 13) Jacob Hashimoto, Mary Boone
- 14) Cui Xiuwen, AJ JAPOUR GALLERY
- 15) Adel Abdessemed, galerie kamel mennour
- 16) Florian Slotawa, Sies + Höke

**In Summation**

Thursday was a new day at Art Basel. Strolling up to the main entrance of the Miami Convention Center, I was almost excited about the event. There were lines of students of all ages waiting. There were people in street clothes—jeans, sneakers and baseball caps—which was itself quite refreshing compared to the bow-tied gents and bedazzled fems of the previous day.

As I mentioned earlier, NY Arts gave away several thousand editions of the latest issue. Everyone was quite happy to receive something for free. All of our peers in print were selling their pubs and offering subscriptions. NY Arts, ever the rebel, opted for spreading some seeds in the very fertile ground that is Art Basel Miami Beach. And to great response, I must say.

Anyway, the FriendsWithYou parade was a great break from the various mega-exhibits. An opportunity to stand in the sunlight of South Beach and to relax and smile. The crowd was young and cooler-than-thou, which is also a refreshing break from the stuffiness of VIP collectors. (Maybe I'm just a tad bit jealous of the money and ability to afford art-collecting. Ya think?)

I must congratulate the Art Sound Lounge and Art Video Lounge located just across the street of the Center at the Miami Botanical Gardens. Besides the Homage to Nam June Paik and the sampler of Lee Wells' Perpetual Art Machine (the full version is located at -scope), the three screens of video works were constantly engaging and first-rate. The Sound Lounge was ultimately the favorite of many. Participants were given wireless headphones and were asked to stroll through the lovely gardens while the sounds of, and music inspired by, insects, birds and nature created an extra special sensory experience. David Weinstein of WPS1 was the curator of these lush interactions between art lover and nature. Sound artists included DJ Olive of downtown NYC fame, Arto Lindsay, Douglas Quin, Jimi Hendrix, Terry Riley and John Cage (how can you not have a sound lab without these last two?).

Later that day, I was off to -scope at the Roberto Clemente Park. Everyone thought the idea of having the fair in a park would be a terrible disaster but it as quite the opposite. There were wooden floors (no mud) and the setup was clean and easy to navigate. Also, -scope offered my favorite lineup of galleries and artists. Where Basel fails to be current and cutting-edge, -scope succeeds. Instead of the champagne bar that was spun around the monster space at Art Basel, -scope gave away Grolsch beer. Good times.

Across the board, Jack the Pelican was the most interesting setup (once again). Guerra de la Paz and Bruce Conkle both presented sculptures and were easily the coolest pieces I saw all weekend. Bold statement, I know. Then there was Jan Brokof at Galerie Baer, Tricia Clive and George Boorujy at Ricco/Maresca Gallery, Jason Hughes at Curator's Office, and Arsen Savadov at Daneyal Mahmood Gallery. Other artists of note: Ben Moon and Tessa Farmer (!).

Thursday night, a dear friend, also in the art game, invited me to an interesting after-party for LA-based Swindle magazine, which is headed by Shepard Fairey. The party was at the 460 Degrees gallery, which featured a large-scale tornado of wood created by Arne Quinze. Other artists featured were Pascual Sisto and Miranda Lichenstein.

The parties during that long weekend were great. There is nothing better than making new friends, running into people you haven't seen in a minute, or than being introduced to an artist you admire when their guard is down. While you might not expect Art Basel to be fun, you'd be surprised. First rule: lean towards the parties that are not so cuckoo crazy. If there is a long line at the door, tell the taxi driver to keep driving. There's just no use. If you want to get tangled up in an art-world mess of pretense, try to check a doorman at one of these fancy joints. Just no use, I tell ya.

After the Swindle gig, Fairey was DJing at the Shore Club. The weekend was filled with such events: Artist as DJ. Dash Snow DJed just down the road, but I was hanging with some West Coast biggies like Gary Baseman. I'm born and bred on the East Coast, I was trying to branch out a bit.

The following day I tried to squeeze in the rest of the fairs before heading back home. Anyone who has been to Art Basel Miami Beach knows that to see everything is basically impossible. That is why we have several writers on the case. Their reports from Miami will follow shortly.

In summation, my trip to Miami entailed some great finds among the usual suspects, some networking for the magazine, a bit of partying with the artists, some business talk with gallerists and a much needed exit from NYC during the bitter cold of NYC in December.

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