

Miami and the ABMB fair, as if you were there

Everyone in **Miami**, from the taxi drivers to the sales associates in the fashion stores, know all about it.

During **the week** they call **ABMB** for **Art Basel Miami Beach**, this **modern and contemporary art fair** imported from **Switzerland**, the entire city undergoes a transformation.

Cultural institutions and major art sponsors from the US have turned this period into an occasion for **celebrations and gatherings**.

Miami, one of the epicentres of **American superficiality**, becomes a **culture and party capital**.

This year the Argentine hotel group **Faena** is inaugurating a **complex of six buildings**, the majority of them designed by **Rem Koolhaas**, and a part of which are being used for **shows and performances** in an impressive room with moving walls.

Obviously the city's biggest collectors are preparing specific exhibitions for the occasion which are open to the public.

The **Rubell Family Collection**, the most professional of all the family museums, has just announced it will be **expanding and moving** to Allapattah District for 2018.

Martin Margulies is still touchingly offering a personal tour of his collection. This year the show is marked by the strong presence of **Jannis Kounellis** and **Anselm Kiefer**.

This is what he had to say about a giant 1979 **Donald Judd** piece in corten steel to a group of students from Sotheby's Institute of Art.

The fair's footprint is also visible, for example, in the **Design district** where there's a huge show organised by the **Gagosian Gallery** and **Jeffrey Deitch**, being curated by **Diana Picasso**, the granddaughter of the modern art superstar. Here she talks about the idea behind the show which has the evocative title '**Desire**'.

Spread across four floors are **52 artists**, with their desires and their gratifications, from the Dada painter **Francis Picabia** to the drawings of the contemporary filmmaker turned myth, **Alejandro Jodorowsky, and his wife Pascale**.

The masterpiece is a stupendous 3D ode to physical love by **Jeff Koons** that once belonged to publisher **Benedikt Taschen**.

Everything or near enough everything is for sale: from **\$15,000 to \$18 million**.

Staying in the spirit **sun, sea and sex**, on Venetian Beach the art dealer **Tornabuoni**, specialising in Italian work from the '50s to the '70s, is exhibiting on a San Lorenzo yacht a series of 28 pieces by names such as **Lucio Fontana, Paolo Scheggi, Enrico Castellani**. Prices go up to **5 million euros**, and it's proven to be a hit, with sales made from the very first day of the show.

As for **ArtBasel Miami Beach**, this towering American colossus of the art market with its **269 exhibitors** has often suffered from a bad reputation due to the party atmosphere that has clung to it.

In truth, the **parties are still here** but the overall **quality** has really **improved** since the beginning.

The fair's director **Noah Horowitz** explains why, in his opinion, this year it is excellent.

I must admit that there are some **wonderful surprises**.

At **Paul Kasmin**, for example, the centrepiece is a 4.5-metre-long abstract painting from 1963 by **Lee Krasner**, the widow of **Jackson Pollock** whose **talent** was no doubt **overshadowed** by the mythology of her husband's genius.

It is on sale for **\$6 million**.

A must-see at **Robilant + Voena** is the distinctly pop-flavoured work by **Mimmo Rotella** who is better known for his ripped posters.

Made in 1966, this print on canvas bears a strong resemblance to the work of English pop artist Richard Hamilton from the same period. Price: **180,000 euros**.

On the **Karsten Greve** stand, what immediately catches your attention is a most unexpected work by **Joseph Beuys**.

In his early years, the German artist with a deep mystical streak created a unique piece around 1950-51 of a **bronze Christ** with a primitive appeal, selling for **\$590,000**.

On this stand too, as well as on **Vedovi** and **Hauser & Wirth's**, are works by **Cy Twombly** [that echo the remarkable retrospective organised by the Pompidou Centre in Paris](#).

The **1981 triptych** offered by **Hauser & Wirth** has a **\$9 million** asking price.

In the category of works that can currently be seen in museums, **Jack Shainman** is showing a painting by **Kerry James Marshall** from 2016, which sold for **\$600,000**.

The American artist is presently the subject of an [excellent retrospective at the Met Breuer in New York](#).

David Zwirner has a 2014 painting by the same artist, which was in the process of being bought when I caught up with him.

The German dealer refused to supply a price range for the canvas and concluded, with no attempt to conceal his obsessions, **'Sold, sold, sold, that's the only word that counts.'**

And seeing as we're on the subject, how exactly is **business at ABMB?**

There's no getting around the fact that the **political climate**, starting with the **United States**, is experiencing severe turbulence.

Allan Schwartzman who is co **Head of the Global Fine Art division at Sotheby's**, **chief curator of Inhotim** (the sprawling sculpture park in Brazil) and the **director** of the famous **Rachovsky collection** in Dallas observes a **dip** in the volume of transactions even though he believes that **globally the market is holding up well**.

During the **ABMB** private view, a certain number of works had already been snapped up, including a sculpture by **Mona Hatoum** and a painting by **Mike Kelley** at **White Cube** or a painting by **Picabia** at **Michael Werner**.

However, the **Zika virus** seems to have deterred some regular visitors to the fair.

'The jetsetters are not there. It's not a great loss. **Buyers from North America and Latin America** are present', commented one dealer.

The other good news is that you do **not** have to be a **billionaire** to buy art at **ABMB**.

The smallest object at the fair and, in my personal opinion, one of the most arresting is a **plaster head** made by **Alberto Giacometti** in the '30s which measures just 2.4 centimetres.

There are five **unique heads** made available by the excellent **Surrealist** and **Dada** specialist **Francis M. Naumann**, who said that he was very satisfied with the fair's opening.

‘Visitors pass by my stand, go on to the contemporary art dealers, then come back to me because they realise that Man Rays are ten times less expensive than today's art.’

Fairs are also useful in putting the value of works in perspective.

Until December 4. www.artbasel.com/miami-beach

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