



Art For Art's Sake

BY JOSH MAX

NOW IN ITS 24TH YEAR, MIAMI ART
WEEK IS ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS
OF THE YEAR FOR SERIOUS
COLLECTORS OF MODERN ART

RIGHT

The curators of Miami Art Week accept an eclectic mix of exhibits, from tribal art to video installations. Last year over 60,000 visitors attended the fair – though few had the stamina to visit all 190 gallery exhibitions.

MIAMI'S PERPETUALLY WARM AND SUNNY CLIMES

can make the city seem an odd place to hold an art fair, given that many creators of masterpieces expose the darkest nether regions of their souls. But over the last three decades, the city has developed into a multi-million dollar Mecca for artists, curators, collectors and art lovers, culminating in Miami's Art Week, beginning December 3. Its roster of galleries – encompassing 190 participants and covering 18,500m² – has earned it a reputation as one of the most important showcases in the world.

Last year, Art Miami – one of the premiere showcases – attracted 11,000 collectors, curators, artists, connoisseurs and designers, and hosted 60,000 attendees over a six-day period. This year, Art Basel will feature more than 200 of the world's leading Modern and contemporary art galleries from North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia, displaying paintings, drawings, sculptures, installations, prints, photography, film, video and digital art by over 4,000 artists. CONTEXT, the sister fair to Art Miami, will feature 65 international galleries, and Aqua Art Miami will feature 45 dynamic young galleries from North and South America, Europe and Asia.

The list goes on. And on and on.

"It's very difficult to sort through the thousands and thousands of works of art," says Nick Korniloff, Art Miami's director. "You just can't have everyone, and you've got to keep the pedigree of the fair very high and the quality absolutely top." However, says Korniloff, "It's a pretty organised unit, believe it or not. We have our application

process, which takes about six months from the end of last year's Art Miami until the middle of May the following year, then we start the selection process. We get well over 600 applications and it's a lengthy process." Being showcased one year has no bearing on whether or not one's work will be included the following year, though. "We continually look to increase the quality and depth and diversity of the show," Korniloff says, "based on the real-time movements happening in the art market, meaning what's being collected, what's being featured in major institutions on exhibition, what collectors are looking for, and so on. Every year we have some turnover in our exhibitors."

Robert Goodman, Florida PR Director for Art Basel for the last 12 years, is a bit more matter of fact about the selection process. "We have a selection committee, they meet in Miami Beach and they go through applications," he says. "We get about 700–800 applications each year and the number roughly stays the same each year. We have a limited amount that we accept. You can't include everyone."

Bentley, naturally, has a place at the table of any event showcasing the finest in art. The company's presence at last year's Art Basel included teaming up with Baxter, who manufacture bespoke armchairs, sofas, beds, tables, chairs and more. In 2010, Bentley co-sponsored an event with the Wolfsonian International University, a museum, library and research centre that uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design to explore what it means to be modern, and to tell the

story of social, historical and technological changes that have transformed our world.

Art scenes can start with the humblest of beginnings, but Miami made its unofficial debut as a stopping point for art lovers in a much broader way, depending upon whom you ask. Legendary artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Surrounded Islands* debuted on May 4, 1983 and comprised over 600,000m² of pink polypropylene which followed the contours of 11 islands in the bay, covering the beaches and floating out 61 metres into the water, where it was attached to styrofoam booms anchored to the sea bed.

The installation required a total work force of 430 people and was tended day and night by 120 people in rubber rafts. The soon-to-explode scene was helped along by a variety of galleries already on their way to success. It didn't hurt, either, that a staggering amount of money started changing hands as Miami's art reputation grew along with visits from deep-pocketed visitors and tourists in town specifically to see or collect the art. Today, some hotels typically demand and get thousands of dollars for a room during Art Week, which is now the single biggest revenue producer for the city.

There are other, equally prestigious shows outside the USA, too, each with its own flavour.

Maastricht, The Netherlands, is known for its particularly exacting methods of verifying the authenticity of its works, and celebs like Kanye West and Calvin Klein have been spotted at its preview days. Masterpiece London features fine art and antiques as well as ultra-luxury watches,

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wines, automobiles and yachts. The Venice Biennale has been around for over 55 years and its art festival is nearly six months long. It also has the distinction of featuring some of the world's most uniquely avant-garde and conceptual works, which some have described as being just plain bizarre. Basel, Switzerland, from which Miami's sister show originated, has been up and running since 1970 and in 2012 featured 300 galleries from 36 countries exhibiting, with more than 65,000 collectors and curators in attendance.

And what do the Miami curators in particular look for? Only everything, says Nick Korniloff. "We integrate design, we integrate some glass, we have very, very strong secondary works and some of the most important artists who ever lived. We have tribal, we have pre-Columbian. We specialise in contemporary and modern, meaning everything from emerging to cutting edge through careers artists and the classics like Picasso and Chagall, to Pop movement things like Warhol. We're entering our 24th year, so we have very strong ties to the European and the Latin American markets, obviously."

Korniloff attempts to cram as much art into his system as possible in between shows.

"I'll be in the Louvre in about two weeks," he says. "I go every couple of years. All the movements and periods in art inspire me but it's very important to keep up with current shows, which curators and committees are bringing what to important institutions. I love the way the design of these installations are bolder and bolder. It's not

about just putting paintings on walls any more."

Is there a single must-see for this year's Art Miami? Korniloff doesn't have to think hard.

"I'm really excited about the curated projects which include video and technology," he says. "Every year it's an amazing experience."

Goodman says, "There isn't anything we would say is hotter or better. You have 250 galleries bringing. What you might like, I might not like and vice versa."

Invariably, in the art world, works are proffered whose content is controversial or downright meant to provoke. What then?

"We obviously don't believe in censorship," says Korniloff, "because it is the art market. But we also wouldn't do anything to inflame or insult any social or religious group. In the past, we have been presented with potential exhibitions that could do that, and that's not our interest. Our interest is to be open to all thoughts and points of view and all elements of the art world. However, we obviously wouldn't do anything that endangers the reputation of the fair or the artists."

On the subject of controversial works, Goodman says, "Over the years there has been some art that's provocative. But we don't comment about what the public accepts or what the people find more interesting. It is what it is. You like Tchaikovsky and I might like Elton John. It is not our role as organisers of this Art Fair to get into a discussion about art, or what is acceptable and what isn't. Art has been controversial from the beginning of time."

WHERE TO STAY

Miami is a city, after all, and offers hundreds of rooms to suit every taste. If you're turning your visit to the fair into a vacation, however, and wish for some elegant peace and quiet away from the metropolis, you won't find much better than The Breakers, located a little more than an hour from Miami. As you approach the castle-like grounds of The Breakers via their 150-metre driveway and a grand Florentine fountain, it's easy to anticipate a flourish of trumpets. Created in Italian Renaissance style inspired by Italian villas of the 1400s, The Breakers must be absorbed slowly, like wine. There are 500 guest rooms, including 56 suites – two Imperial suites and two Royal Poinciana. The Flagler Club, a private residence on the 6th and 7th floors, offers exclusive concierge service, snacks and beverages all day long. The Flagler Steakhouse, Seafood Bar and the Italian Restaurant are just some of the high-end restaurants on site, and The Breakers' 1,850m² indoor/outdoor spa offers a variety of packages. There's more, much more, though. www.TheBreakers.com 

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