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Derek Blasberg's Party-Fueled Art Basel Miami Beach Photo Diary



Artist Almudena Lobera's installation on the beach outside the Faena Hotel, which was intended to remind people to find the art in the everyday.

Our man on the street hits the fair!

BY DEREK BLASBERG

The Miami outpost of the Art Basel fair began in 2002 as a tropical venue where art lovers could congregate during the cold winter months. Since then, nothing has changed and so much has changed. The art lovers still come, though now the more sophisticated of them arrive before the fair opens and high-tail it out of there right after the V.I.P. preview on the first day. But the biggest change in the last half dozen years has been how the fair has been overtaken by thrill seekers, fashion brands, and even N.B.A. players and Hollywood actors moonlighting as artists in secondary careers. (No, really, both **Adrien Brody** and **Sylvester Stallone** were hocking works at the fair.) By Friday, most of the bigwigs hopped

on their P.J.s and made room for the waves of partiers who descend on South Beach. An even bigger difference this year was the weather: starting Thursday, storms and cold fronts tore through Miami. I couldn't help but wonder, Does Mother Nature hate contemporary art? Not that a little thing like a torrential downpour could stop the rave-level partying.

I arrived on Tuesday. That night was the opening of a show called "Unrealism," an unexpected partnership between mega-dealer **Larry Gagosian** and the controversial art-world personality **Jeffrey Deitch**, a former dealer, current curator, and the onetime director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, in Los Angeles. Full disclosure: Gagosian is a friend and employer—I often contribute texts for his gallery—so I had an inkling of what to expect in the Moore Building, the 1921-built former furniture outpost of Moore and Sons, which got a revamp by **Zaha Hadid** after the Design District's **Craig Robins** began refurbishing the neighborhood. The highlight of the show was how well it all came together in the venue: four levels of mainly figure paintings on symmetrical walls that allowed viewers to easily and efficiently snake through works by artists such as **Dan Colen** and **Richard Prince**. The space wasn't crowded, and near the end of the exhibition's open, **Rashaad Newsome's** *King of Arms Krew (Miami Chapter) Mass Processional* performance went past, which included the Florida Memorial marching band and motorbike and A.T.V. stunts performed by the Miami Bike Life Crew. Judging by selfies, two of the most popular works were the human-size candle of **Michael Chow** that **Urs Fischer** created and spent the entire weekend burning down in the middle of the gallery space, and another human-size sculpture by **Tony Matelli** entitled *Sleepwalker* (2014), which I thought was foreboding of the week ahead.

The next day was the opening of the fair, which my friends and I decided looked like something between Madrid's running of the bulls and billionaires' version of Black Friday. Elbows were out and tensions were high as collectors ripped through the Miami Beach Convention Center. The whole ritual is fascinating to watch, and since my budget is not yet at a Picasso level, it's still a thrill to witness the hysterical mash-up of art, passions, and outrageous price tags. It's difficult to remember many of the specifics, though it all went up on my Snapchat. But, since I was hungry, I do vividly remember a Warhol painting of a hamburger in the Gagosian stall. For the past few years, **Gavin Brown's** gallery has been positioned by the entrance, and he cleverly installs something amusing and photogenic on the end of his booth. This year it was neon work by **Karl Holmqvist** that asked in giant writing "WHO RUN THIS MOTHER?" I stood by that and diligently took pictures of passersby and Beyoncé fans in front of it.

The entire city was turned out for the fair—more than 19 separate fairs operate during Art Basel

Miami—but when I left the convention center, I walked by the Bass Museum of Art off Collins Avenue. This year, the Public Art Fund's **Nicholas Baume** curated the installation of 27 large-scale public works by the likes of **Katharina Grosse**, **Sterling Ruby**, and **Olaf Breuning**. I particularly liked **Tony Tasset's** enormous fawn, which was appropriately called *Deer* (2015), because I like any art that brings the pun out in me. Oh, deer! That evening, *Vanity Fair's* **Bob Colacello** hosted a dinner for the collector **Douglas Cramer** to celebrate an award and upcoming show at the N.S.U. Art Museum, in Ft Lauderdale. Cramer is one of television's pioneering producers, which, Bob reminded me, provided him an opportunity to make one important artist's dream come true: in 1985, he cast Andy Warhol as an extra in an episode of *The Love Boat*.

The rest of the fair is blurry, and I chalk that up to the weather. But, speaking of Andy, Pittsburgh's Warhol Foundation honored Michael Chow at a dinner at (where else?) Mr. Chow's, and the restaurateur turned artist played Christmas music throughout the meal. Why? Because Chow's show, *Voice for My Father*, is inspired by his late father—he would be 120 years old this year—and he wanted it to have a cheery soundtrack. One of the city's best cultural institutions is the Rubell Family Collection, and this year the focus was on female artists. "No Man's Land: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection" was the title, which of course I loved because of the aforementioned use of puns.

Hotels are a hot topic in Miami. "Where are you staying?" gets asked probably more than "Did you get anything good at the fair?" I stayed at the Edition hotel, which is dangerous because even when you think you're safely back in your hotel and ready for bed, you can be coaxed out. On two nights, I thought I was safe and ready for sleep, but ended up . . . in the basement bowling alley. And Soul Cycle hosted a pop-up studio at the recently opened 1 Hotel. The online-art-world tracker Artsy hosted a new hotel called the Nautilus. But with so many hotels now on the Collins Avenue strip, I can't help but wonder: Who stays there the other 51 weeks of the year?

On my last night in Miami, I did what Miami does best: I went clubbin' and danced on a banquette. This particular evening has been a bit of a tradition, however. Every year, the W hotel's owner, **Aby Rosen**, and his wife, **Samantha Boardman**, do a dinner at the Dutch, which funnels into the Wall nightclub next door. The last thing I remember from that night is **Michael Hess** putting Bob Colacello on his shoulders for a victory lap around the nightclub. Basel wins again!