

ART REVIEW

Art Basel Miami Beach, Post-Irma, Is Still Swinging



Daniel Knorr's sculpture "Navel of the World," outside the newly renovated Bass Museum in Miami Beach.
JASON HENRY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

By JASON FARAGO
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MIAMI BEACH — This year's edition of [Art Basel Miami Beach](#), America's premier contemporary-art entrepôt and air-kissing arena, was always bound to take place against a backdrop of construction. This city, after all, loves real estate as much as it does art, and two museums — the veteran [Bass Museum](#) and the new [Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami](#) — have spiffy new homes to show off. The fair itself has new digs, too, or at least refreshed ones: The hulking Miami Beach Convention Center, a few blocks from the Atlantic and home to some 250 galleries, is in the midst of a long-overdue refresher, its faded Art Deco facade reclad with dark glass.



The candy-colored “Miami Mountain,” by the Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone, is also outside the Bass Museum.
JASON HENRY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

But Miami Beach’s recovery from Hurricane Irma, which slammed into this low-lying resort city in September and turned the main thoroughfare of Collins Avenue into a waterway, has occasioned its own round of reconstruction. The major museums here [were spared a direct hit](#), but numerous local artists whose studios or warehouses flooded have had to [apply for emergency relief](#). The hurricane also delayed renovations to the Convention Center, whose adjacent streets are still ringed by barriers and tarpaulins. And several seaside properties remain closed, including the Raleigh Hotel, my regular spot for a prefair cortadito for a decade now.

But Art Basel is still swinging, and the gang’s all here: collectors from America and Latin America, young artists on the make, star museum curators escorting checkbook-toting board members, and propulsive dealers jogging along the beach at 6 a.m. after nights on the tiles. The event can sometimes feel like its very own art bubble off the coast of the United States, and during Wednesday’s V.I.P. preview of the 16th edition of this warm-weather cousin of the long-running Swiss art fair, even the revelation of the Saudi buyer of Leonardo da Vinci’s “Salvator Mundi” took a back seat to cooing about the new floor layout, grouching about the traffic and laughing about a dispute with the local fire department that left many powerful dealers locked out of the fair’s opening.

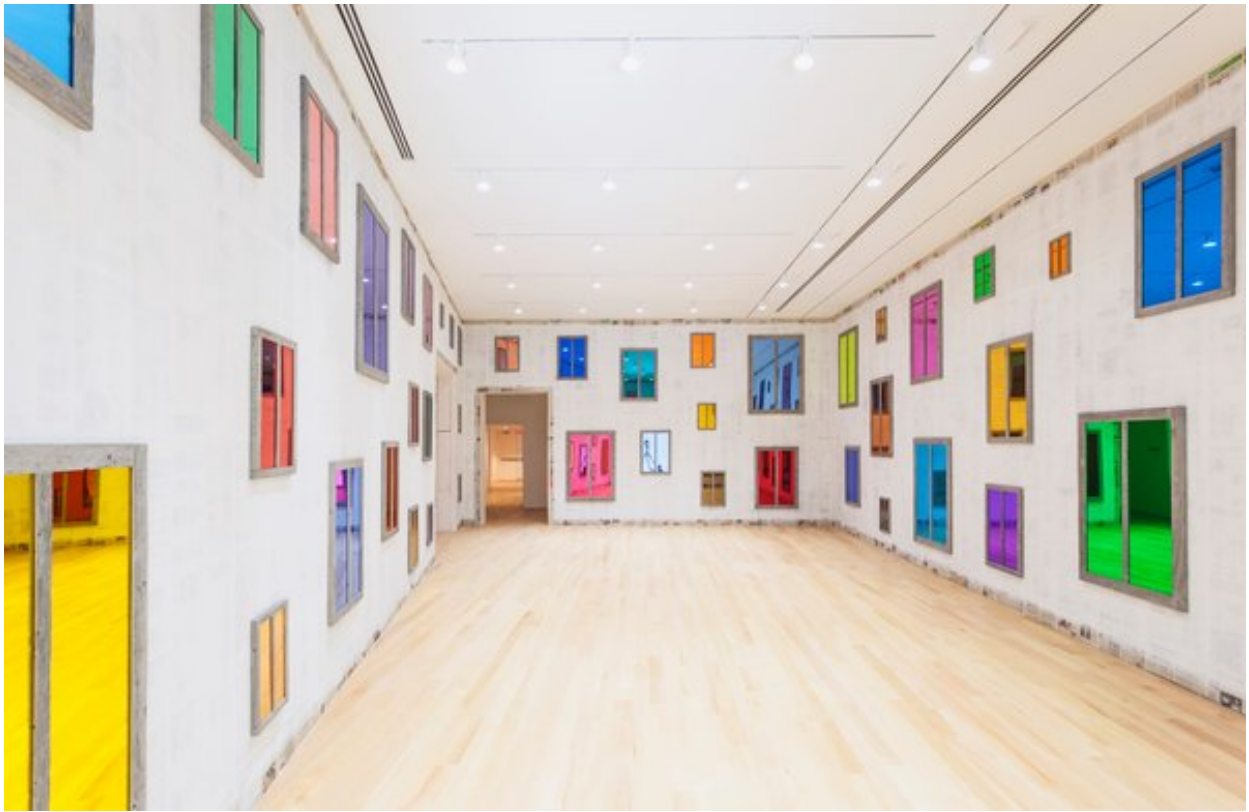


Shirts created collaboratively by the artist Sanya Kantarovsky and the designer George McCracken are at the booth of the Tanya Leighton Gallery at Art Basel Miami Beach.
ELIZABETH LIPPMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Among the galleries at Art Basel Miami Beach, which runs through Sunday, you will find, as always, a mix of blue-chip trophies, rising talents, cheesy selfie backdrops and genuine discoveries (especially at Mexican and Brazilian galleries, which reliably offer the most insights to American audiences). A number of significant artists appear at three, four or more galleries here. With diligence and a very large bank account, you could walk out of here with your own personal retrospective of the vital and challenging German painter [Albert Oehlen](#): The Berlin dealer Max Hetzler is showing a syncopated abstraction of browns and yellows from 1990, while Edward Tyler Nahem of New York has a rowdier, stained work from 2005, and Corbett vs. Dempsey, from Chicago, features one of his recent, more composed [“Tree” paintings](#).

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[Wolfgang Tillmans](#), the sensitive, London-based German photographer, is also represented across the fair, from David Zwirner, which is showing a large-scale 2013 portrait of a young man whose hair and sweater are flecked with snow, to the Los Angeles gallery Regen Projects, with a knockout new seascape, whose wide expanses and dramatic clouds recall the 19th-century photographs of Gustave Le Gray.



An installation view of Ugo Rondinone's exhibition "good evening beautiful blue," at the Bass.
ZACHARY BALBER / THE BASS, MIAMI BEACH

Mr. Tillmans is a photographer at the top of his game, as is [Carrie Mae Weems, who recently completed an intriguingly melancholy 25-piece composition that pictures the R&B singer Mary J. Blige](#) in poses you can read as proud, vulnerable, accomplished and resigned. The photographs in this series, titled "The Blues," on view at the booth of the [Jack Shainman Gallery of New York](#), are tinted the titular color, which allows Ms. Weems to short-circuit photographic stereotypes of African-Americans, but also freights her pictures of Ms. Blige with inescapable sadness.

Among younger talents, I was impressed by a pair of delicate but unsettling paintings on rice paper by the Iranian artist [Shahpour Pouyan](#), at the booth of the [Galerie Nathalie Obadia](#), based in both Paris and Brussels. Mr. Pouyan has reproduced centuries-old Persian miniatures that depicted Muhammad and other religious figures — Central Asian artists, unlike their Arab counterparts, frequently portrayed the prophet in art — but has excised the figures to leave only gold arches, blue backdrops and flowing calligraphy. The erasure is at once a tribute to the less heralded constituent elements of Persian painting and fearsome metaphor for recent attacks on religious representation, from the [museums of Baghdad](#) to the [newsroom of Charlie Hebdo](#).

Part of Mika Rottenberg's "Ponytails" (2014), a work in one of three inaugural shows this artist has at the Bass.
ZACHARY BALBER / THE BASS, MIAMI BEACH

But I often find Art Basel Miami Beach more valuable for historical surprises.
[Galeria Jaqueline Martins](#), one of São Paulo's sharpest, has a solo presentation of the Brazilian feminist and visual artist [Letícia Parente](#) (1930-1991), who grafted

together street plans of Salvador, Fortaleza and Rio de Janeiro into personal memory maps, or who filmed herself applying makeup in the bathroom while her mouth and eyes were taped shut. (Parente is also a standout of [“Radical Women.”](#) the history-rewriting showcase of female Latin American artists up now at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and coming to the Brooklyn Museum in April.)

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And the can't-miss booth of this fair comes from a gallery that, I'm embarrassed to say, I'd never heard of before: [Applicat-Prazan](#), a decades-old Parisian space participating in Art Basel Miami Beach for the first time. This specialist in midcentury European painting has arrived with a dozen bracing works by figures too little known in the United States, including Otto Freundlich, Nicolas de Staël and Hans Hartung. A seething 1960 abstraction by [Karel Appel](#) features thickly applied splashes of white and brown paint, whose seeming carelessness belies clear care. In Jean Hélion's "Trois Nus et le Gisant" ("Three Nudes and Reclining Man"), a disquieting painting from 1950, three women — the Fates, or just an artist's models? — sit in judgment over a splayed young man, perhaps in postcoital slumber, perhaps murdered.

“After Moses” (2017), a painting by the Iranian artist Shahpour Pouyan, at Galerie Nathalie Obadia at Art Basel Miami Beach.

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This week also featured the opening of a permanent home in the Design District for the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, which was founded in 2014 [after a turbulent split](#) with another museum. The Spanish firm [Aranguren & Gallegos Arquitecto](#) has fitted the three-story building with a facade of shiny metal panels and cutout triangular windows: very un-Deco, very new Miami. Commendably, the institute has free admission, though in these initial days, it is encouraging visitors to book time slots online.

Alex Gartenfeld, its deputy director and an astute curator who has stuck with the museum through the last years’ ructions, has organized its inaugural show: [“The Everywhere Studio.”](#) a ramble through recent art and economic history that examines how artists’ work spaces have shaped their production. The isolation of the studio in art from the 1960s and ’70s — including Bruce Nauman’s and Hanne Darboven’s Conceptual documentations of everyday life in the studio, and an excellent self-portrait at work by Jörg Immendorff — feels very different from Neil

Beloufa's and Yuri Pattison's studio scenes from the neoliberal present, when work and free time have collapsed into each other.

Carrie Mae Weems's "The Blues," a series of tinted photographs of the singer Mary J. Blige, at Jack Shainman Gallery's booth at the fair.

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But the show is badly overhung, with more than 100 works, not all memorable, in too little space. I suspect that Mr. Gartenfeld, who is at work on next year's New Museum Triennial in New York, will need time to learn what the spaces of the new institute can do: There is good thinking here, and an impressive catalog, but "The Everywhere Studio" needs to be decluttered.

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Back by the beach, the Bass has completed its transformation by the architects [David Gauld and Arata Isozaki](#); the museum now has 50 percent more space on the same footprint, helped by the removal of cumbersome ramps that led visitors

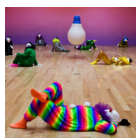
upstairs. In three inaugural solo shows, [Mika Rottenberg](#) is presenting a new video that takes her uncanny, dream-logic visions of factory work to the United States-Mexico border, while Pascale Marthine Tayou has disrupted the Bass's permanent European wing with new African masks that evoke mass tourism and global trade.

But it's the [Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone](#) who steals the show with a walk-in installation, hilarious and grim by turns, consisting of 45 full-size mannequins of clowns, seated on the gallery floor with expressions of boredom and fatigue. After a few days at the fair, the metaphor of the exhausted clown is all too apt.

Art Basel Miami Beach

Runs through Dec. 10 at the Miami Beach Convention Center; artbasel.com/miami-beach

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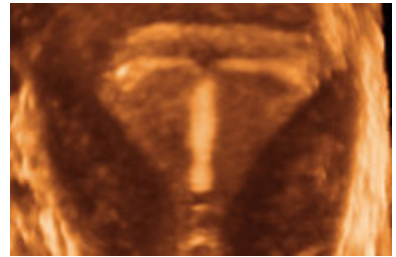
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