

# The Miami Herald

## Is Art Basel bigger and better than ever? The early reviews are in

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The Miami Beach Convention Center rebuild is months from completion and Hurricane Irma is a fresh sting in Miami. None of that stopped the powerhouse Art Basel Miami Beach fair from opening its 16th edition Wednesday to the usual mob of rarin'-to-go VIPs in a roomier, reconfigured format — a much-improved platform for the country's largest visual-arts bazaar.

From the 11 a.m. starting bell — actually, there is no bell, but given the rush through the gate there ought to be one — galleries were ringing up some hefty sales amid a celebratory atmosphere to global collectors f eager to snag that singular artwork before anyone else.

The fair, which last year drew about 77,000 people, opens to the general public Thursday at 3 p.m. and runs through Sunday.

Not 10 minutes into opening day, Miami Beach gallerist David Castillo sold a \$110,000 dye-sublimation print by Lyle Ashton Harris to a Michigan collector who plans to donate it to a museum, he said. Castillo's booth, in the Nova sector dedicated to new works, was also getting lots of attention for intentionally goofy collages by Kalup Linzy, who creates his pieces during live performances as a cross-dressing artist named Katonya.

Katonya, whose works go for a Basel-bargain \$2,500 each, will be in performance in her "studio" at the booth — a bed and table laid out with wigs and art supplies — every day during the fair at 3 p.m.

"This guy's a hoot!" cried out one woman to a friend as she studied collages by Linzy already up on the wall.



Fusun Eczacibasi, left, tours the Nicolai Wallner gallery booth, from Copenhagen, with art agent Gitte Sjkodt Madsen, right, during the VIP opener at Art Basel Miami Beach.

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Not long after Castillo made his big sale, New York's Paula Cooper

Gallery sold a blockbuster piece by conceptual and minimalist artist Sol Lewitt to a private museum for a price the gallery would not specify but said was between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. The work, which occupied the entirety of a long wall, consists of 100 separately framed color variations of a geometric form on paper. Gallerist Jay Gorney said he could not identify the buyer for reasons of confidentiality, but called the piece "extraordinary."

The rest of the Cooper booth was filled with what Art Basel executive director Marc Spiegler called "archetypal" works by several seminal late-20th century American artists, including a composition of red sandstone bricks by minimalist Carl Andre and a miniature sculpture by Mark di Suvero.

Cooper was only one of many galleries that brought serious — and expensive — art by modern and contemporary heavyweights. There were plenty of young artists and fresh work on display as well — and some live performances that drew the curious.

At Mexico's José García booth, a fairgoer was getting a professional massage as part of a work by artist Christian Jankowsky. The piece also incorporated a video of a Japanese masseuse attempting to give a massage to an outdoor Henry Moore sculpture. At Fergus McCaffrey's booth, artist Mairead Delaney was literally creating art on the floor, molding concrete around the contours of her own body.

Even with brisk wheeling and dealing, though, the feel of the fair's first day was composed, probably a result of the fair's new layout. It has brought wider aisles, bigger booths and easier circulation, with two expansive plaza-like spaces near the center.

"It's a fantastic year," said Alex Gartenfeld, deputy director and chief curator of the recently opened Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami. "Galleries brought very high-quality work. And it feels somehow a bit calmer this year."



Alcija Kwade's "Revolution" is the centerpiece at one of the new open spaces at Art Basel Miami Beach in the Miami Beach Convention Center.

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The permanent floor changes were made possible by the convention center's ongoing renovation — which created confusion outside the center, but should be finished well in advance of next year's Basel fair, Beach City Manager Jimmy Morales said. The added space provides

more room to view the art, and also for the all-important conversations between gallerists, collectors and curators, Spiegler said.

"The new layout makes it just joyful," said prominent Miami collector and arts patron Dennis Scholl. "Everybody's loving it."

Still, navigating the fair requires a firm grip on the floor map. Entrances, lounges and gallery locations have all changed from previous editions.

"It's so spacious," said Miami collector Peter Menendez. "But I feel a little lost."

Even a mildly confused stroll through the fair brought viewers face to face with some unusually rich showcases. New York's Hammer gallery hung numerous works by Picasso and Matisse and Impressionists Bonnard and Renoir. On view at New York's Edward Tyler Nahem were enough mid- and late-20th century masters fill a small museum: De Kooning, Rauschenberg, Basquiat, Pollock, Richter and Lam, among others.

There was also increased recognition for significant artists whose importance might have been overshadowed previously, such as 84-year-old Sam Gilliam, whose abstract "color field" painting at New York's Mnuchin gallery sported a red dot sticker — meaning it was sold — early on.

At Hauser & Wirth, the first few hours brought several major sales, said co-owner Iwan Wirth, including works by Mark Bradford, the Los Angeles artist whose work filled the U.S. pavilion at this year's Venice Biennale; a recently discovered work by Piero Manzoni, and piece by Bruce Naumann. A three-ton sculpture by the late Eduardo

Chillida priced at \$5.5 million was on reserve.

“This is the strongest fair we’ve had,” Wirth said. “We’ve brought fewer works but with higher value, and it has paid off. This fair has really matured.”



Rita Targul, director of STPI Gallery of Singapore, left, and Mary Leadbetter, a former Singapore resident, talk in front of a work by Tobias Rehberger during the VIP opener at Art Basel Miami Beach fair on Wednesday.

For chief fair sponsor UBS, entry to the fair and its exclusive customer lounge were a hot ticket “like the

Super Bowl,” said John Mathews, head of the bank’s private wealth division. This year, the firm had the most requests ever from clients wanting to attend the fair, he said.

There is also work by many rising newcomers, and some has political dimensions. Many of the works mix materials that make even wall-hung works three-dimensional. Mexican artist Tania Candiani’s “Obreros 2003,” shown at Vermelho gallery, uses the paper hats often worn by restaurant workers to create a poncho — a reference to the prevalence of Hispanics in menial restaurant roles.

Acacia thorns are mixed into a work by Guisepppe Penone at the Konrad Fischer Galerie. Michell-Inness & Nash showed a weaving made of black leather belts by Monica Bonvicini. At neugerriemschneider, show-goers crowded around a chandelier-like series of 181 glass spheres by Olafur Eliasson priced at \$530,000 that, at midday, was already on hold.

No fair is complete without an outlandish work by British artist Damien Hirst. This year’s eye-catcher is “Sacred Heart of Hope,” a sculpture in a clear vitrine that incorporates a dagger through a meaty heart (actually a bull’s heart) flanked by white dove wings, shown at White Cube.

## IF YOU GO

The 16th edition of Art Basel in Miami Beach, [artbasel.com](http://artbasel.com), opens to the public at 3 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 7, and runs through Sunday. Day tickets cost \$50 [online](#), \$60 at the door, \$36 for college students and seniors 62 and over. Group tickets require advance registration; run-of-show tickets are offered.

Ongoing renovations at the convention center [mean big changes](#). Only those with VIP cards will be able to enter through the Convention Center's west side; all others will need to enter through the east side along Washington Avenue. Avoid driving or getting dropped off on Washington Avenue between Dade Boulevard and 17th Street; much of it is blocked. Valet is at the Filmore Center at the corner of Washington and 17th Street.



Mary Leadbetter takes a moment to photograph Julio Le Parc's Sphere Miroir inside the Nara Roesler booth during the VIP opener at Art Basel Miami Beach in the Miami Beach Convention Center. **CARL JUSTE**  
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