

# Miami Herald



David Castillo, owner of David Castillo Gallery on Lincoln Road in Miami Beach, stands in front of his booth in the “Galleries” sector at Art Basel Miami Beach at the Miami Beach Convention Center. The artwork, from left to right, is by artists Pepe Mar and Adler Guerrier. Anastasia Samoylova

## It took 10 years, but he’s finally made it to the main stage of Art Basel

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It took only a decade, but David Castillo finally learned the secret handshake.

The owner of the Miami Beach-based David Castillo Gallery this year joined the main “Galleries” sector at Art Basel Miami Beach. Only one other South Florida gallery holds that honor: the veteran Fredric Snitzer Gallery of Miami.

“It helps a lot because it’s something that’s vetted by an international community,” Castillo said. “It’s also a validation of the gallery’s efforts for many years. I remain true to the vision that each artist deals with identity, which is something that is very important to me. Perhaps 14 years ago there wasn’t this interest by institutions or other galleries to fill those historical gaps, to find great artists who were considered ‘the other.’ ”

One of the major benefits of being in the Galleries is that Castillo can show works from his entire collection as opposed to a prescribed list of artists for an approved program.

“So, that’s amazing to be in this format with the most important galleries in the world,” he said. “You can switch out the booth every day. It’s your moment to show what the gallery’s about.”

His booth, located at F26 in the main Art Basel fair at the Miami Beach Convention Center, features a slew of local artists, including Glexis Novoa, Quisqueya Henriquez, and Adler Guerrier. Henriquez’s “All Spiked in Black and White” features metal spikes arranged in a geometric pattern across a cream-colored canvas measuring 5 by 4 feet.

“Almost 14 years ago, she was the very first artist exhibited in the gallery and the very first artist I ever showed at Art Basel in 2008 in the Positions sector, when it used to be in the containers,” he said. “We have a long history. You could say that a lot of artists have been with me from the beginning.”

Art is all around the booth from the inner and outer walls to the floor. The 28-foot-square linoleum floor features a lemon yellow, gray and white geometric pattern. It’s by Sanford Biggers and sells for \$120,000.

“So, that’s what it feels like to have \$120,000 on my feet,” Castillo says, smiling. “Cozy. It feels kind of good.”



The 28-foot-square linoleum floor at the David Castillo Gallery at Art Basel Miami Beach features a lemon yellow, gray and white geometric pattern. The floor is by Sanford Biggers and sells for \$120,000. The Lincoln Road gallery is in the main 'Galleries' sector for the first time at Art Basel Miami Beach at the Miami Beach Convention Center.

**Zachary Balber**

There's a good reason for that, he said, noting the work is meant to engage the viewer.

"It's meant for people to walk on it, to dance on it," he said. "I sold a piece recently to the Bass Museum, which they have up right now in the permanent collection. They bought it because they saw a different piece at the Armory Show last March."

Castillo likened admission to Galleries to getting tapped by the Nobel Prize Committee. Although he was not awakened by a 4 a.m. telephone call from the Swedish Academy, Castillo said he was elated to be notified after two years of applying.

"You get an email and an official letter that tells you, 'We're delighted to inform you that the committee has selected your gallery for the Galleries section,'" he said. "It's something that they deliberate for a good deal of time."

Noah Horowitz, director of Americas Art Basel, said Castillo's accolade is well-deserved.

"We are thrilled to have Miami-based David Castillo Gallery in the Galleries sector for the first time this year," Horowitz said. "The strength of David's program and diversity of his artist roster have helped earn him this place, and we have every confidence that he will continue to mount excellent exhibitions and fair presentations looking ahead."

Castillo's gallery has steadily been making a name for itself, selling works to the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim and some of the top 100 collectors in the world.

"There are few galleries that can say that," Castillo said. "So, the gallery already has a level of programming that befits this sector."

But even with those credentials, it's still the prerogative of the Art Basel selection committee to decide whether a gallery gets admitted to Nova, the main show, or not at all, he observed.

"You never know anything for sure until you get the letter," said the Class of 1992 Hialeah High School graduate. "It's like being valedictorian — which I was of my high school — and still not knowing what school you'll get into."



David Castillo in his gallery at Art Basel Miami Beach. The artwork is by Vaughn Spann. **Danielle Damas**