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Where did the mad rush go? Art Basel Miami Beach opens serenely in newly revamped venue.

BY JANE WOOLDRIDGE, ANDRES VIGLUCCI, TAYLOR DOLVEN AND SIOBHAN MORRISSEY

jwooldridge@miamiherald.com

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When Art Basel Miami Beach opened on Wednesday morning to the very VIPS invited to the fair for an early look-see, there was no mad crush at the door, no unseemly Black Friday-like rush to the booths as in former years.

It was instead a measured procession of the affluent, well-connected and nattily attired that sauntered into the 17th edition of the largest contemporary art fair in the country, thanks to a [gleamingly rebuilt and enlarged Miami Beach Convention Center](#). The facility now affords fair-goers expansive lobby spaces and, for the first time, four entry points to the vast exhibition floor, in place of the single funnel on each side of the old convention center that could at times back up like the lines for a new iPhone.

The reigning serenity, though, did not mean that gallery owners weren't ready to sell and collectors eager to buy. Early evidence was that neither a slowing global economy nor two days of stomach-churning plunges on Wall Street spoiled collectors' and museum curators' appetites to acquire some of the finest, and costliest, works of visual arts the world has to offer.

While collectors might have been more inclined to ponder — and in some cases, haggle — before opening their checkbooks this year, some were definitely buying.

Within a few hours of opening, Brett Gorvy of Levy Gorvy Gallery said his booth, the walls of which were covered in wallpaper with Keith Haring's signature figures to complement works by Haring and Warhol on offer, had sold several pieces for under \$1 million each. He also had holds on several other works.



Emilio Steinberger's shoes match the Keith Haring work at the Levy Gorvy space during Day 1 of the annual Art Basel Fair at the Miami Beach Convention Center on Wednesday, Dec. 5, 2018.

PATRICK

FARRELL pfarrell@miamiherald.com

“Yesterday there was doom and gloom among some dealers who said their top collectors were not coming,” Gorvy said. “But today the buzz is huge. I’m seeing very serious people.”

Market drops, Gorvy said, can turn into a good buying time. “People are moving from the stock market into something they can see and hang on the wall,” he said.

At Pace Prints’ booth, 30 people were in line to sign up for the chance to pay five figures for prints of three works by hot graffiti artist Kaws (Brian Donnelly). The gallery was selling 100 prints, and the line quickly formed to get on a lottery list. Gallery owners wouldn’t say how much the pieces were going for, but gave a window of \$60,000 to \$75,000.

Art Basel’s global director, Marc Spiegler, said Miami Beach gallerist David Castillo — who joined the top-tier “Galleries” sector of the fair for the first time — had nearly sold out his stand by the afternoon. Selma Feriani, whose gallery in Tunisia focuses on North African and Middle Eastern art, sold her stand out entirely, Spiegler said. New York gallery Metro Pictures also reported doing well.

“It really is too early to say, but we have been speaking to a number of very happy galleries today,” Spiegler said by text message.