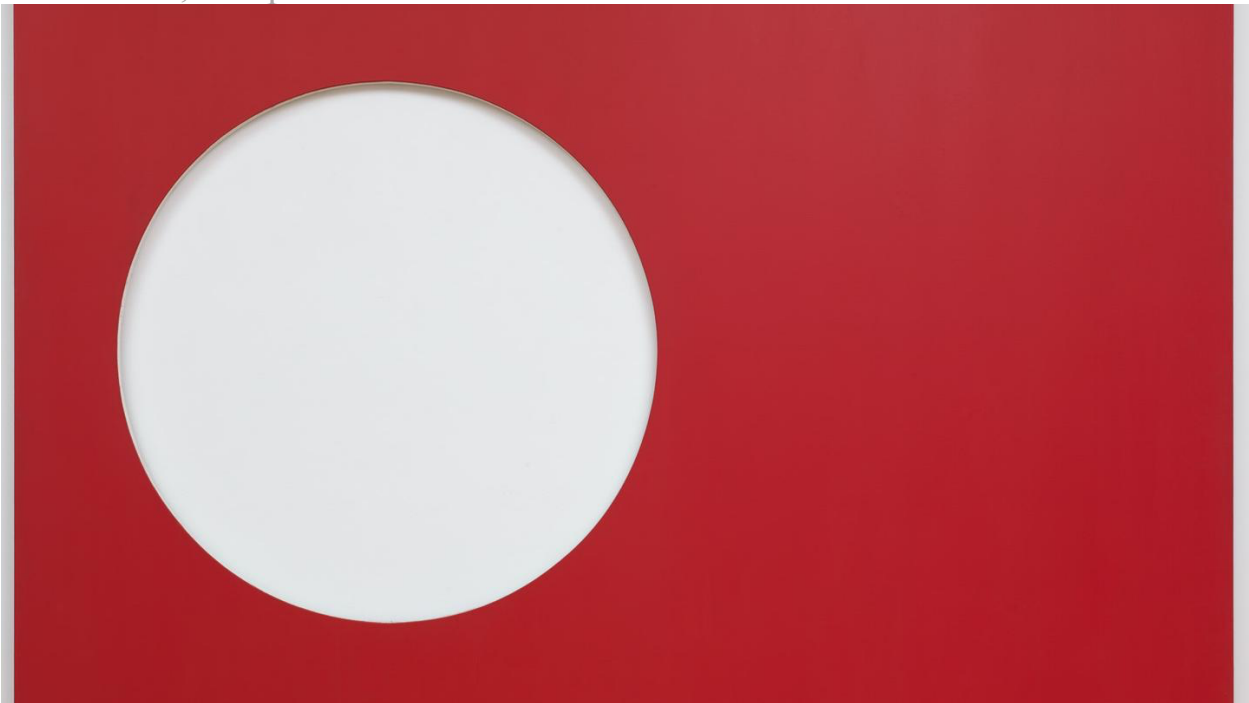


GARAGE

Jeffrey Deitch and Gagosian Team Up to Defeat Zombie Formalism

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Steven Parrino, *Untitled*, 1988. © Steven Parrino. Photo by Rob McKeever. Courtesy the Parrino Family Estate and Gagosian

ABSTRACT/NOT ABSTRACT, their joint show in Miami, is all about meaning/expression.

For the past three years, a reliable place to look for good art during Art Basel Miami Beach has been the Design District's Moore Building, the venue for a string of curatorial collaborations between Jeffrey Deitch and Gagosian. The initial prompt for the New York dealers' embrace of co-production, Deitch explained to me during last night's opening of the unofficial series current and third installment, *ABSTRACT/NOT ABSTRACT*, was that local real-estate kingpin Craig Robbins double-booked the place the first year. (This was when Deitch was working as director of LA MoCA and art world outsiders would, the dealer recalled, quiz him about what they should be looking at.)

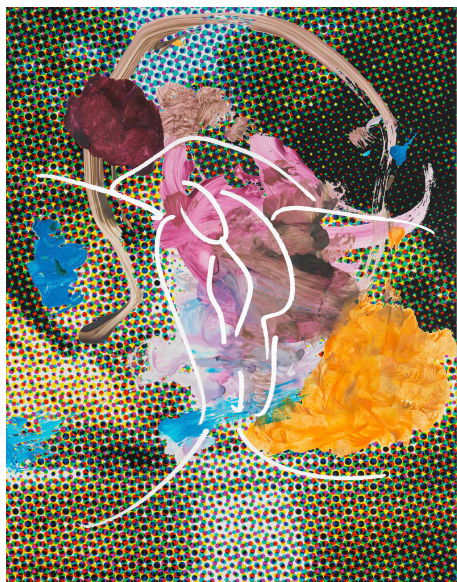


View of *ABSTRACT/NOT ABSTRACT*, Moore Building, Miami. Photography © Fredrik Nilsen. Courtesy Gagosian and Jeffrey Deitch, Inc., New York



View of *ABSTRACT/NOT ABSTRACT*, Moore Building, Miami. Photography © Fredrik Nilsen. Courtesy Gagosian and Jeffrey Deitch, Inc., New York

The typically lively *ABSTRACT/NOT ABSTRACT* takes the general stance that abstraction these days is less about exploration of color and space in the manner of, say, AbEx, and more about things left unsaid. On the first floor, for example, Dan Colen's 2014 painting *Random Killings*, encrusted with pointy metal studs like a belt from Hot Topic, hung next next to Seth Price's barely abstracted image of a noose. "We chose thirty different approaches to abstraction, and most of them are related," Deitch elaborated. "The artists are in conversation with each other, so Christopher Wool is in conversation with Kelley Walker and Seth Price. There are a lot of interesting connections that you can see, so Albert Oehlen looks back to Gerhard Richter in the sixties. With Rudy Stingel it's a performative approach to abstraction, dipping his feet in acid." He gestured toward a Styrofoam work with indentations that suggested footprints in snow.



Jeff Koons, *Landscape (Waterfall) I*, 2007. © Jeff Koons. Photography by Rob McKeever. Courtesy Gagosian

Upstairs at the Moore, several works by Josh Smith, in bright Miami pastels, flirt with the idea of transforming themselves into sunsets. Kerstin Brätsch's contributions to the show, two neon-lit, psychedelically colored topographical maps, occupy the same elevated territory as a stunning group of paintings by Christina Quarles, whom Deitch anointed "the hottest artist in America right now." They do that *au courant* thing of incorporating cheesy '90s graphic design, but way better than most, also throwing some Francis Bacon-esque body horror into the mix.

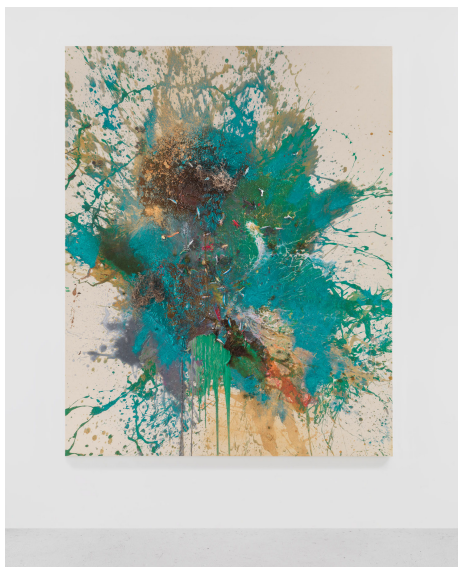
There's a profusion of fine work at the Moore this time around, but no clear standouts—a contrast to last year, when

Harmony Korine's dank porn hideaway lodged immediately in the memory. There's a Sterling Ruby that, while wholly respectable, might not be sufficient to convert the unbeliever. The slight sense of fulfilling a requirement that can dog the inclusion of such works is perhaps what riles some Miami-haters. But Deitch should be commended for focusing so intently on his theme—a weirdly rare quality. Walter Robinson wrote impactfully a few years back on "zombie formalism," an idea (or, really, a term) that proved so irresistible it sparked an undeserved mini-backlash against abstraction in general. This show is expressly *not* an manifestation of that tendency; the works here don't eschew meaning, or expression. In fact, they bubble with it.

And since this is Miami, many of them look great too.



Sterling Ruby. *WIDW. ALLPORT.*, 2017. Photo by Robert Wedemeyer. Courtesy Sterling Ruby Studio and Gagosian



John M. Armleder, *Galaxy*, 2014. Photo by EPW Studio. Courtesy the artist and Massimo De Carlo, Milan/London/Hong Kong and Gagosian