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Art Basel Miami Beach Is Officially Canceled for 2020

Art Miami, NADA Miami, Aqua Art Miami, and CONTEXT Art Miami all followed suit.

Nate Freeman, September 2, 2020



Art Basel's Director Americas Noah Horowitz speaks onstage during the Art Basel Miami Beach press conference at the Miami Convention Center.

It's official: the 2020 edition of one of the most high-profile art events in the world is off.

Art Basel announced Wednesday that it would cancel the upcoming edition of its Miami Beach fair, scheduled to take place at the Miami Beach Convention Center in early December 2020. In a statement, fair organizers cited the impact of the pandemic specifically in South Florida, but also in art hubs around the world that would have sent collectors and dealers as emissaries. They also mentioned uncertainty surrounding restrictions on large gatherings.

The cancellation comes in a year when Art Basel already had to scrap Art Basel Hong Kong, which was scheduled for March, and the flagship Art Basel fair in Switzerland, which was scheduled for June. 2020 will now officially be the first year in decades without an edition of the world's most closely watched contemporary art expo.



Installation view of David Castillo Gallery at Meridians Art Basel Miami Beach.

“It is with great regret and disappointment that we announce the cancellation of our December show in Miami Beach, as we know how crucial our show is for our galleries, as well as for the greater Miami arts community and economy,” Noah Horowitz, Art Basel’s director Americas, said in the statement. “We thank everyone who shared their perspectives and insights with us over the past months and weeks and look forward to returning to Miami Beach next year to deliver a successful show.”

Galleries slated to show in Miami—where there were 341 new cases reported just on Wednesday, making for a positivity rate of 5.3 percent—will not pay any booth fees associated with the planned 2020 fair. For those who apply to the 2021 edition and are accepted, the application fees paid for this now-cancelled edition will be rolled over. (For the year’s earlier cancelled fairs, Basel exhibitors were fully refunded while Hong Kong exhibitors were refunded 75 percent, with the other 25 percent rolling over to be put toward booth fees at any of the three fairs in 2021.)

In the statement, Art Basel stressed that, despite not having any physical editions this year, organizers hope to blunt the impact of the cancelled fairs with a slate of online programming. All galleries that were set to show at the in-person 2020 fair will have access to virtual booths in the online version of Art Basel Miami Beach, set to appear on screens in December.



Art Miami 2018.

Following suit, the production company that runs several of the week’s other major fairs, Art Miami Show Group, officially announced that it was cancelling the 2020 editions of Art Miami, CONTEXT Art Miami, and Aqua Art Miami. In its place, organizers promised the launch of Miami Art City, an initiative that would run online during the original fair dates, December 1 to 6. The initiative promises “proprietary technology to replicate the art fair experience online in an unparalleled virtual art fair community.”

“We look forward to returning next December to celebrate Miami Art Week and the 32nd edition of Art Miami in person with all of you,” Art Miami Show Group president Nick Korniloff said in a statement.



NADA Miami at the Ice Palace Studios, 2018.

Longtime satellite fair NADA Miami also sent a press release indicating that it would not be holding the 18th edition in December. It also will pivot to online programming.

NADA's approach is a somewhat novel one: Instead of creating a digital facsimile of their gridded booth space, participating galleries will be invited to install their would-be booth in their gallery, or in an alternative space in their city. Video of the "booths" will be simulcast through the NADA online portal, allowing users to click through to several different presentations in one sitting.

The hybrid physical-digital initiative will run from December 1 to 5.