



THE ART NEWSPAPER

‘Christmas came early’: Art Basel Miami Beach opens with avalanche of blue-chip sales

The most valuable sale reported was an abstract painting by Gerhard Richter for \$5.5m, from David Zwirner



As of press time, Jeff Koons's balloon work was still available at David Zwirner's stand
Liliana Mora

Carlie Porterfield 4 December 2025

At the 23rd edition of Art Basel Miami Beach, 283 galleries have filled the Miami Beach Convention Center for the final big test of the market this year. Following a robust season of auctions in New York two weeks ago, with sales totalling \$2.2bn, organisers and dealers say they are cautiously optimistic that collectors will buy with renewed confidence, particularly the blue-chip material that had moved more slowly in the last three years. While auction results are not necessarily a barometer for the broader market, especially for primary market dealers, early sales during Wednesday's VIP preview suggested growing momentum.

The most valuable sale reported as we went to press was from David Zwirner. The gallery says it sold an abstract painting by Gerhard Richter for \$5.5m, as well as the Alice Neel painting *Pregnant Nude* (1967) for \$3.3m. Two *Homage to the Square* paintings by Josef Albers from 1955 and 1964 sold for \$2.5m and \$2.2m, respectively. The gallery says it sold a new painting by Dana Schultz to an American museum for \$1.2m and a circa 1969 wire sculpture by Ruth Asawa for \$1.2m.

Within the first three hours, Hauser & Wirth reported sales 40% higher than the gallery's total from the fair last year. "Christmas came early for our team this morning," Hauser & Wirth's president Marc Payot said in a statement early Wednesday afternoon. "The pace seems almost leisurely on the surface, but business is consistently brisk. We're already fielding inquiries about the works that will be newly installed tomorrow when we switch things up for the second day."

The gallery announced 27 sales. Leading the group were George Condo's *Untitled (Taxi Painting)* (2011) at nearly \$4m and Louise Bourgeois's *Persistent Antagonism* (1946-48) sold for \$3.2m, though neither actually appeared at the stand—both were pre-sold after the gallery's preview was sent to clients. The gallery also sold Bourgeois's *Mr. Follett: Nursery-Man* (1944) for \$2.5m. Other seven-figure sales included a work from Ed Clark's *Paris Series* (1990) and Henry Taylor's monumental painting *Every Brotha Has a Record* (2020), each for \$1.2m, along with Rashid Johnson's towering planter *Standing Broken Soul "Nowhere Man"* (2025) for \$1m.

At Thaddaeus Ropac's stand, Alex Katz's *Orange Hat 2* (1973) led sales at \$2.5m, followed by his later canvas *Wildflowers 1* (2010), for \$1.5m. Georg Baselitz's *Selbstportrait 1953, 18.V.97* (1997) sold for €1m, while Robert Longo's *Untitled (Formula One Car Crash)* (2025) found a buyer for \$750,000.

At Pace, *Heroines, Beyoncé, Serena and Althea* (2020) by Sam Gilliam sold for \$1.1m, followed by Lynda Benglis's *Fanfaronade* (1979) for \$400,000. Almine Rech sold a painting by Pablo Picasso for a figure between \$2.8m and \$3m, and a James Turrell for a figure between \$900,000 and \$1m.

"2025 has been a rough year," says Vincenzo de Bellis, Art Basel's chief artistic officer and global director of fairs. "But the second part of the year, it was picking up in Basel already. Then, especially September, October, November—reporting what galleries have shared with me—were significantly better than 2024."

Gladstone Gallery reported selling Robert Rauschenberg's *Tarnished Honor (Copperhead)* (1989) for \$1.5m. Olney Gleason sold Robert Indiana's *Eat* (1962) for \$135,000, two wall panels by Diana Al-Hadid for \$110,000 each and a Robert Motherwell painting for \$100,000. Sprüth Magers reported selling Anne Imhof's *Pink Cloud* (2025) and Rosemarie Trockel's *Gogol* (2011) for €250,000 each. Perrotin sold four works by Lee Bae, each priced between \$60,000 and \$200,000. The gallery also reported selling a painting by Daniel Arsham for around \$95,000. Kó sold *The lost cat* (1973) by Nike Davies-Okundaye for \$100,000 to the Toledo Museum of Art.

The New York-based gallery Berry Campbell sold Yvonne Thomas's *Caribbean Shore* (1959) for \$375,000; Mary Abbott's *Hill Dancers* (1948) for \$275,000; Elaine de Kooning's *Catskill Series* (1965) and *Shuyangh Cave (Cave No. 144)* (1988) for \$75,000 each; and an untitled circa 1971 work by Betty Parsons for \$65,000.

During last month's auctions, Lynne Drexler's *Keller Fair II* (1960) sold for more than \$2m (with fees) at a Christie's day sale, more than doubling its \$800,000 low estimate and setting a record for the artist's work at auction. That result bodes well for Berry Campbell, which is offering Drexler's *Blue Bay* (1968), priced at \$950,000.

"This is also a really good example from the 1960s, so we definitely are using that reference," says gallery co-owner Christine Berry. "People are coming in here and saying, 'Oh, that was a good price, right? Since this price is less than that price, even better.'" The Drexler had drawn strong interest by Wednesday afternoon, though a sale had not yet been finalised. Berry says the gallery has been "steadily busy" since September.

"I don't know if it's our niche market or our price points, which seem to be in the middle of a lot of [Art Basel exhibitors], but things are going well," Berry says. (The gallery specialises in overlooked Abstract Expressionist women artists.)

At Matthew Brown's stand, Carroll Dunham's *Box Creatures* (1995) sold for \$350,000 ahead of the artist's upcoming drawing retrospective at the Art Institute of Chicago. Lisson Gallery sold an untitled 2015 work by Anish Kapoor for £500,000, along with two textile works by Olga de Amaral, a tapestry by Otobong Nkanga and two wall-based word pieces by Jack Pierson, who has a solo show just up the road at the Bass Museum of Art.

The Miami-based dealer David Castillo, one of the fair's longtime local participants, sold a large-scale painting by Studio Lenca for \$50,000 within the fair's first 45 minutes. The night before, all 20 paintings in the artist's solo show at Castillo's brick-and-mortar space had sold out.

"I think there's definitely been a shift over the last few months in the art market, where things are more buoyant again than they were the last couple of years. People are definitely expecting sales," Castillo says.

That sense of buoyancy, he adds, has been reflected in the works dealers are bringing and the purchases collectors are making. "The people coming here want the big and the bold," Castillo says. "People are passionate. They're not just buying it to put it in storage."