



Memo From Miami | The Wrap-Up

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After a week drenched in Art Deco delights and debauchery, the dust has settled on deals and the sand has been shook out of art lovers' shoes. Art Basel Miami Beach drew to a close on Sunday and a louche state of relative calm has returned to South Beach.

Dealers are generally candid about the fact that here even more than at other big fairs, like Frieze or Art Basel proper, the point is to grab attention and make fast sales in quantities. Dozens of great galleries participate, although only the naïve wandered the convention center expecting aesthetic epiphanies, or were offended by the oxymoronic "overly commercial" nature of the spectacle. Just as the week as a whole is often lionized, or demonized, as an exercise in the art of parties, the fair itself is best parsed as a study of the booth as an art form.

Bright and light are the keys when it comes to pulling inventory for Miami. Case in point is **Johann König's** striking presentation, which included a pastel haze on a big sheet of aluminum by the painter **Nathan Hylden**, a mirrored labyrinth by **Jeppe Hein** and a Knoll sofa color-blocked in neon spray paint by **Katharina Grosse**. Outside Team gallery's corner booth: a dynamic tableau consisting of **Banks Violette** salt castings strewn on a low plinth was backlit by two painterly, fluorescent pink monochromes by **Gardar Eide Einarsson**. But any expression of indulgence will do, regardless of tint. Tucked into an all-black minibooth beside **Franco Noero's** stand was the gallery's **Art Cabinet** by the celebrity idolatrist **Francesco Vezzoli**, who had added details to three antique ready-mades: a casting of his own visage (producing a single tear) to a headless torso, red nails to a disembodied marble foot and, aptly, dried narcissus flowers to an ancient vase.

Camp is another route. Note **Vito Acconci's** sound installation emanating from a monstrous clam shell at **James Cohan**, or a better-measured gag outside **Barbara Gladstone's** booth, where **Allora & Calzadilla's** piece set a classical bronze sculpture horizontally in a lighted tanning bed. Familiar to most on the art circuit, this work was first shown last summer at the American pavilion of the Venice Biennale. Its reprise in Miami closes the essential loop that all art activities orbit, between poles of culture and commerce.

Though it can be uneven, the accompanying **NADA** fair, which focuses on emerging work, has always felt like a more comfortable home for artists. The result of **Artadia's** inaugural award to an exhibiting artist was an exemplary demonstration of this fact, and of the spirit of community that pervades the smaller-scale fair. The prize went to **Margaret Lee**, **Cindy Sherman's** longtime assistant whose work was on view at a couple of booths, but who spent her time at the fair tending to the gallery she co-founded: **47 Canal**, whose question-mark paintings by **Gregory Edwards** and videos appropriating runway shows by **Stewart Uoo** helped it stand out as one of the best. The **Deauville** hotel - home to **NADA** - buzzed all week but really got going on Saturday when the grounds were flooded with young talent attending and performing at **NADA's** first pool party.

And speaking of parties, they were incessant. For the second year running, Alex Rodriguez (the Yankees third baseman), hosted a photography-free reception at his home, a place chock-full of athletic facilities and art, and art in athletic facilities (notably Jon Kessler's kinetic sculptures in the batting cage). Maria Baibakova hosted a powerful room of art worlders for a cocktail party honoring Matthew Brannon's commission at Lincoln Center, in her family's art-flushed penthouse at the Setai - the only fine hotel, it seems, classy enough to limit the ruckus to small gatherings. And at Temple House, a palatial private home-turned-event space on Euclid Avenue, Absolut celebrated Art Basel Miami Beach with Swedish cuisine and cocktails flavored with outré superfoods like sea buckthorn.

The fashion labels were in attendance, too. At the pinnacle of luxury and of Lincoln Road architecture, Moncler threw itself a 60th anniversary party at the famous Herzog and de Meuron parking garage. Guests of the glitzy dinner preceding it were given flowing white hooded parkas, quite the extreme giveaway and quite the extreme incident of cleverly orchestrated absurdity, given the climes.

If anything constitutes a shark jump this year it was the overabundance of French after-hours clubs, up to three from one last year. Le Baron became itinerant, but settled into the classic SoBe spot Nikki Beach for the weekend. Silencio took up the basement of the Delano. Chez André, a collaboration between André Balazs and André Saraiva, held down the Shelbourne. It was, predictably, too much.

Just as it purports to be, Art Basel Miami Beach is a fusion of art, design, fashion, celebrity and every other ego-boosting industry under the sun. Sometimes the combinations go ghastly, but that's life. If you embrace contemporary culture and all its perversions, there's art, broadly defined, to be found almost constantly during this strange and hysterical week. On Sunday while revisiting the main fair one last time, I observed the spontaneous formation of a social sculpture. Following in the wake of a young woman with an edgy, immaculate bun and an almost eerily focused gait was a tightly choreographed crowd of at least 40, hands outstretched with smartphones. They were whispering and exclaiming in many tongues: It is Beyoncé!

This post has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: December 12, 2012

An earlier version of the post had the wrong image for Banks Violette's salt castings and fluorescent pink monochromes by Gardar Eide Einarsson.