

miamiartzine

MAIN MENU



A Day in the Life of Art Basel Miami Beach 2019

Takeaways from the First Few Days

Friday, December 6, 2019

By Irene Sperber



Media Reception
 Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber, Florida Secretary of State Laurel Lee, Noah Horowitz, Director of Americas (Art Basel), Marc Spiegler, Global Director (AB), John Mathews, Ultra High Net Worth Americas (UBS Global Wealth Mgmt)

Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2019

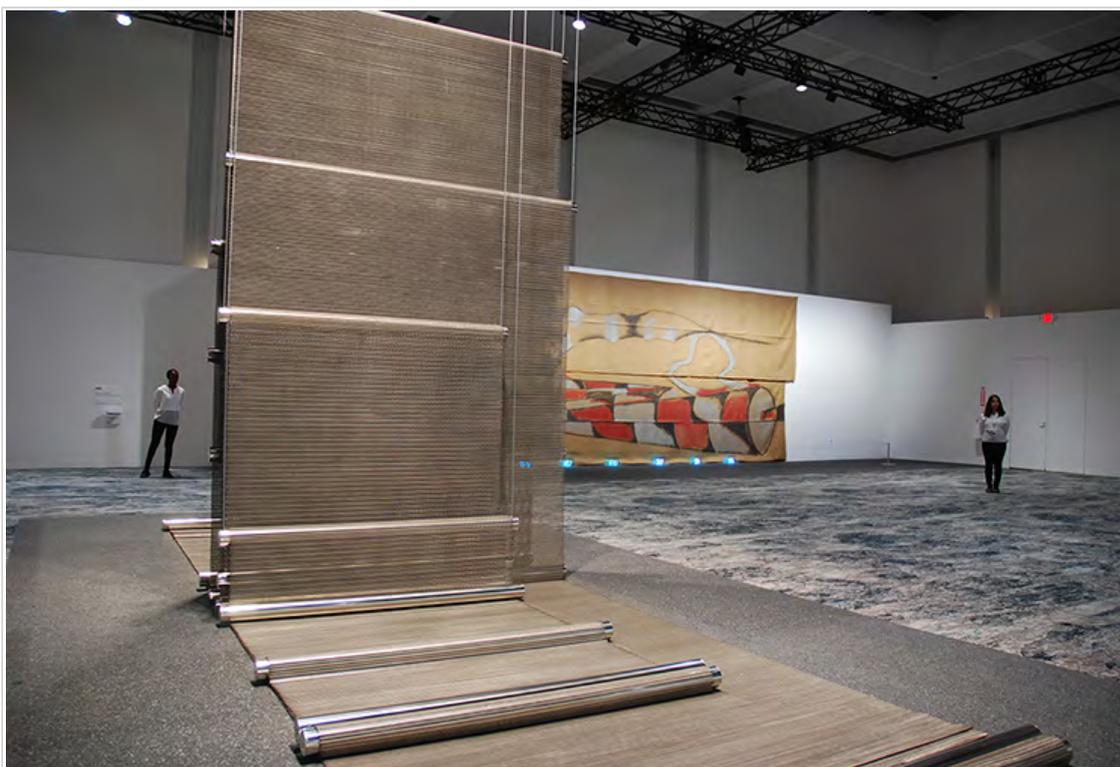
Dear Diary: It's only Day Two? Really? Art Basel's Media Briefing and subsequent exhibition opening felt like a hundred dizzying days all rolled up into one mass of ideas, visuals, people, concepts, logistics and deep thoughts, each allotted maybe 47

seconds to process. I wish each crumb of experience could be given proper due diligence, not sucked up into a swirling mass located somewhere in the cerebrum. And I'll need a much larger hippocampus area. Yup, for sure more brain storage is necessary.



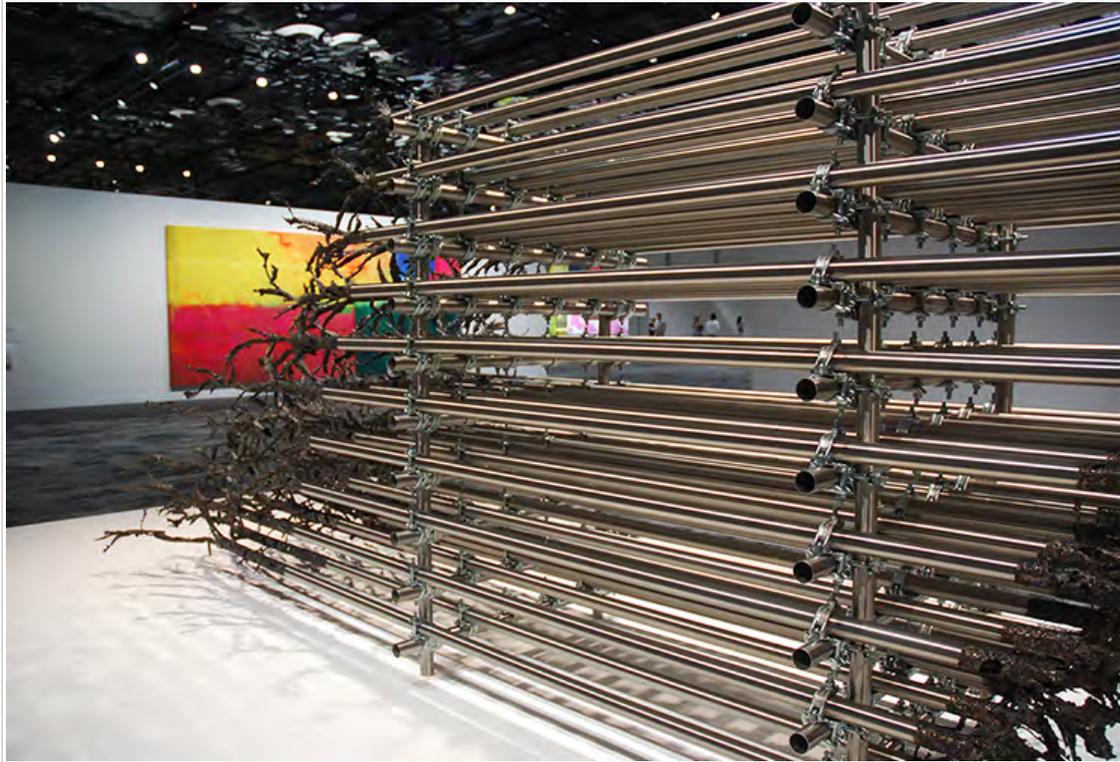
Cocktail Party, Tom Friedman

First up was media speeches (mercifully short) by Art Basel's principals and Miami Beach officials, making sense of a turmoil of dirt, dust and traffic redirection that Miami-Dade has been experiencing while it grows into one of the most enticing destinations in our hemisphere. I swelled with hope and pride that I chose to live here, and now. Listening to the planners and doers gave me a sense of relief that Miami Beach had a master blueprint in mind that will greatly benefit, not just line pockets and fuzz up our semi-tropical visuals. For a brief moment, I saw it as they saw it, and it was grand. The positivity of Art Basel's business end toward the new convention center design was reassuring to hear. Now referred to as the Convention "campus," I trotted out my inner virtual drone as they mapped out the green spaces holding the "campus" together, molding the masses of steel into a people friendly environment. Collins Canal Park, the Botanical Garden and Pride Park humanize the area.



Arthur Lescher, Machine River (Meridians)

Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber joked that if he "had run on a platform of better weather it would be mission accomplished." Insert a small round of appreciative polite laughter. Gelber remarked on Art Basel Miami Beach turning 18 this year and aligned it with a version of our own 18th year. Gawd help us, but I got the point about maturation, though 18 people years can be a tad frightening. He's right. It shows. You can feel the uptick. Miami Beach spent 1.5% of the city budget on art last year, this year it's "up to 2.5 percent, a jump more than any other city. The imprint of this fair has changed the city."



Luciana Lamoth, The Garden (Meridians)

Small but important fact: This is the first Art Basel Miami Beach show offering a sliding scale for gallery entry, leaving space for smaller newer galleries not yet far enough along in their game to afford the pricey full admission fees. African American artists, Asian art and women artists are given their fair share of recognition this year, making room for a fresh cool breeze to infiltrate the convention center floor filled with 269 galleries from 33 countries.

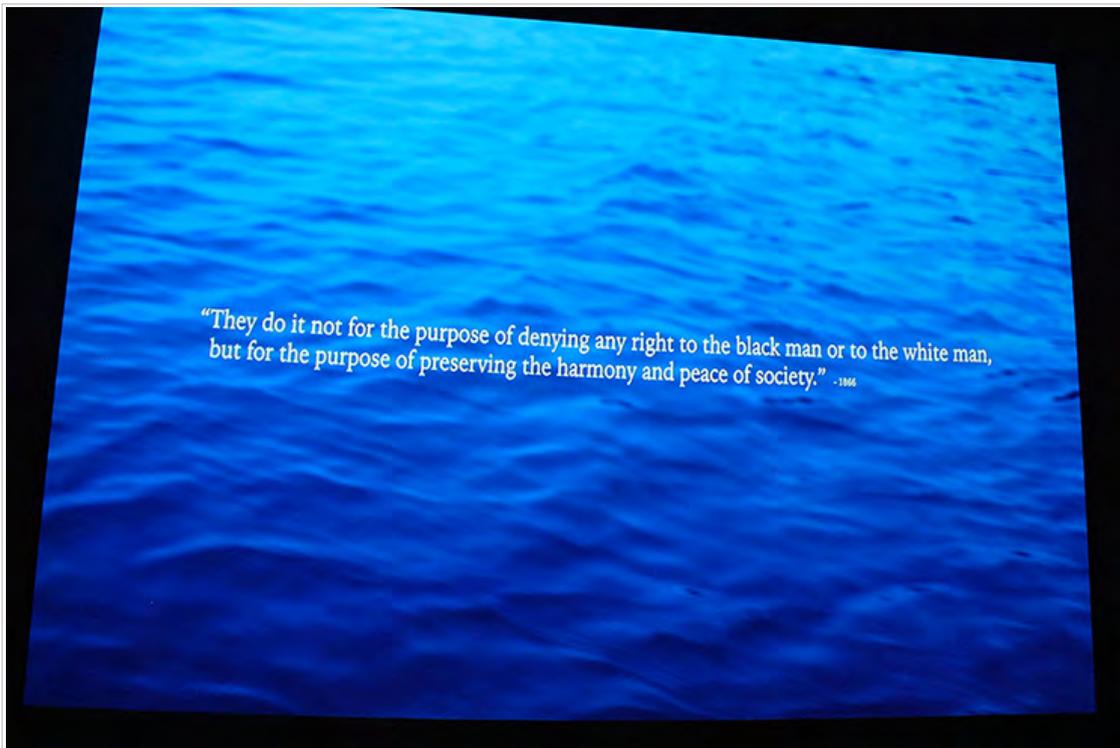
There are 20 new galleries this year. The page is turning. A generational shift and altered sensibilities to a more environmental movement is afoot. Miami's participation is strengthening as well. Central Fine Gallery from Miami Beach has made the gargantuan leap forward to the ABMB roster this year debuting in the Nova sector with Haitian artist Tomm El-Saieh. David Castillo Gallery and Fredric Snitzer Gallery are returning Miami galleries.

Speaker John Mathews from UBS was a font of information: women collectors spent at higher price points, mostly young collectors abound, and there was more accountability in art with the rise of legal issues. People are willing to pay more for sustainability, while the focus is on inequality, poverty, climate change and responsible production, i.e. using found objects in projects. The shift is in-your-face-obvious this year. We eagerly await the trickle down effect into the entire populous.



New Sector, Meridians

When this appropriately self congratulatory meeting came to an end, the floodgates to the fair finally opened at 11 a.m. as a herd of journalists snorted and pawed the ground outside the security clearance area. I beelined upstairs to the new ballroom (being utilized as the new Art Basel Meridians' sector) for a spin around the 60,00 square foot grand ballroom. Meridians welcomed 39 projects to the cavernous space.



Theaster Gates, Dance of Malanga video (Meridians).

Quick question: I've seen the square footage in person. This would be one ballroom that would easily accommodate your fairy godmother turning a whole pumpkin patch into orange carriages for however many Cinderellas South Beach could pony up. How many events can use this mammoth amount of space?

I traveled solo to the main fair so had plenty of head space to think uninterrupted. One could sense the moments of epiphany that the artists must have experienced. It was overwhelming as these visible thoughts and ideas flew at me, overlapping into a

cacophony of sights and cultures and emotion. By the last four rows, I was burned out and lamented how sad that we have to absorb at such a clip that our minds need sneakers and a good strong protein drink to reach functional conclusion.



Norman Braman with Miami Beach officials, Micky Steinberg, Michael Góngora, David Richardson and Jimmy Morales

Theaster Gates's (Meridians sector) video piece is the story of Malaga Island, a bi-racial community after the Civil War off the coast of Maine, now uninhabited. I grew up in Maine and had no idea. Gates is in constant motion, shining lights into dark corners. I have had nothing but respect for him since being exposed during an exhibition called "Soul Manufacturing Corporation" at Miami's Locust Gallery in 2012. I didn't get his depth at first, until I heard him talk and walked out a fan. He "bridges the gap between art and life" sez the paper outside the installation. This is no empty claim.



Kara Walker, A Warm Summer Evening in 1863, Spruth Magers Gallery(Galleries sector)

On the main floor, Kara Walker has a piece that exhibits her usual calm genteel visual with a deep dark interior of a life covered in swee' tea but sporting a nasty underbite of old southern slavery. She is a master with the toile wallpaper background and black felt cutout silhouette masking a cornered soul.



LEFT: Rose B. Simpson, Great Lengths, Jessica Silverman Gallery, Booth H 9. RIGHT: Sidival Fila, Amazonia, Jerome Poggi Gallery, (Nova).

There were number of quiet pieces that tend to get lost in the hoopla. I was drawn in just because of the silence in one exhibition. Taking the time to inquire, I was surprised, then not surprised that the artist was a monk. It displayed such a loud quiet amongst the embarrassment of art riches. Artist Sidival Fila (Jerome Poggi Gallery) lives in a Monastery in Rome and works "with texture and tension of canvas," using stitches as a practice of "the ethics of care, repairing."

Art patrons careen from strong thoughts to ethereal to tragic to cruel in a space of five minutes of viewing, not always realizing how our bodies absorb each images depth. This is a fair worth every footfall.



The Garden, Portia Munson

With three more days to go, I cannot imagine where the roller coaster ride will take me, but I'm glad I bought a ticket.

"Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time." Thomas Merton.

Photos by Irene Sperber

MORE INFORMATION

For times, tickets, talks and general information:

Design Miami (Dec 3-8)

www.miami2019.designmiami.com/page/venue-schedule-miami-2019

Design Forum is a new space for 2019 talks. Visit the enclosed, Media Suite for intimate, video-recorded conversations located within the DF space.

Design Miami comes with it's own added satellite shows for your design viewing pleasure

www.miami2019.designmiami.com/design-satellites

Art Miami (Dec 3-8)

www.artmiami.com/practical-info

CONTEXT

www.contextartmiami.com/home

Design Miami

www.miami2019.designmiami.com

Design Miami satellite shows

www.miami2019.designmiami.com/design-satellites

Miami Design District

www.miamidesigndistrict.net

Event Calendar

www.miamidesigndistrict.net/calendar/

Transportation:

A courtesy shuttle from the fairs to the JW Marriott Marquis and the Perez Art Museum Miami will operate during fair hours.

Brightline from Palm Beach and Ft Lauderdale - promo code ARTMIAMI for 25 percent off SMART rides.

[Metromover downtown](#)

Wynwood Trolley & the Biscayne Trolley, free and connect at the Adrienne Arsht Metromover Station.

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