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Titanic Art Basel Miami Beach reigns through Sunday



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By Jan Sjostrom

Daily News Arts Editor

Art Basel Miami Beach is one of the few places where you can find blue-chip art under the same roof with works by the father of conceptual art in the United Arab Emirates and a freshly minted installation inspired by gay serial killers.

All that and more was on view at the 267 galleries assembled for the Western Hemisphere's most important contemporary art fair, which opened Wednesday with a by-invitation preview at the Miami Beach Convention Center.

»Art Basel Miami Beach fair week revs up this week

At mid-afternoon, Palm Beacher Nicki Harris was making a leisurely progress through the fair.

"It's amazing," she said. "It looks fabulous."

Resident David Genser was having a more frustrating experience. Just about everything that caught his eye already was sold, even though he was lined up at the door for the 11 a.m. opening. He had no luck acquiring paintings by Belgian artist Harold Ancart at two galleries.

He'd rather deal with galleries outside of the frenetic fair setting.

"I come to these fairs just to see if there's anything new, but mainly, they've become social events," he said.

The blue-chip art announced itself at the door, where heavy-hitters such as Acquavella, Helly Nahmad and Galerie Gmurzynska were clustered.

Deeper into the fair, Hirschl & Adler featured multiple paintings dating from the 1950s and 1960s by Stanley Twardowicz, one of the second-generation abstract expressionists whose careers were eclipsed by the advent of pop art in the 1960s.

A former Golden Gloves boxer and auto industry worker, he hung out with the likes of Jackson Pollock in the 1950s at the Cedar Tavern in New York. Many of his abstractions were inspired by close-up views of nature.

In the Survey section, dedicated to historical exhibitions, DC Moore Gallery is showing works spanning the career of 20th century American watercolorist Charles Burchfield, whose intense, sometimes fantastical paintings were animated by his love of rural upstate New York. The exhibition also includes examples of his 1920s wallpaper designs. An entire wall is papered with one of the designs.

Dubai isn't a place usually associated with conceptual or performance art. But Hassan Sharif was practicing both in the 1980s in the United Arab Emirates. Alexander Gray Associates is exhibiting photographs from his 1980s performances and more recent works made up of found objects commenting on the global, consumer-driven society. His sprawling *Ladies and Gentleman* is made up of interwoven women's and men's shoes and shoelaces splashed with paint.

In the Positions section, featuring solo shows by emerging galleries, Mathew Gallery is showing *Meat Locker*, a project by Villa Design Group. The London-based cooperative, made up of Than Hussein Clark, James Connick and William Joys, was given free rein to create a work for the fair.

Their jumping-off point was the 1997 murder in Miami of fashion designer Gianni Versace. He was gunned down by Andrew Cunanan, who is believed to have murdered four others as well.

Colored LED lights stream through cutouts in stainless steel "gateways" to display the names of gay serial killers and imagery associated with their crimes.

The artists “don’t lack for imagination or inspiration,” gallery representative Bianca Heuser said.

The same could be said for many of the artists featured in Art Basel Miami Beach.

If You Go

What: Art Basel Miami Beach

When: Through Sunday

Where: Miami Beach Convention Center, 1901 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach

For information: Call (305) 674-1292 or visit artbasel.com/miami-beach



Hassan Sharif's "Ladies and Gentlemen" is made up of women's and men's shoes and shoelaces coated with paint. The 15-foot-wide work is on view at Alexander Gray Associates at Art Basel Miami Beach. Photo credit: Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York 2015 Hassan Sharif / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York - See more at: <http://www.palmbeachdailynews.com/news/entertainment/arts-theater/titanic-art-basel-miami-beach-reigns-through-sunda/npbp2/#sthash.cLhZLUMj.dpuf>