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10 Important Things Actually Happened at Art Basel Miami Beach

By Rachel Corbett



Miami's annual art-world circus opened a week ago today, and it's been a bit of a blur. It's probably even been a blur to read about. And as the hand-stamps fade and the pixie dust settles, we're starting to ask ourselves: What did we really take away from Miami's art fair this year? What actually important things happened between the celebrity DJs and Disaronno bars? Here's a list of ten.

1. Miamians joined in nationwide protests.

Those who weren't blinded by the glare of Jeff Koons balloons at the fair's VIP preview on Wednesday probably noticed that a grand jury did not indict the policeman who killed Eric Garner. A few days later, "Shut It Down" protesters blocked off I-195 to protest the decision. Many also commemorated the loss of 18-year-old Miami graffiti artist Israel "Reefa" Hernández-Llach, who died after police Tasered him last year. For an event where a text painting counts as a bold political statement, in a city with a reputation for superficial, this was ... something.

2. The coronation of Lucy Dodd.

The abstract painter's "thumping epic 25-foot-wide painting installed at the Rubell Family Collection was *the* standout artwork of the week by any young (-ish) artist anywhere, in all of Miami Beach," wrote the art adviser Todd Levin on his Facebook page — a sentiment that was echoed throughout the week. It was this kind of show at the Rubells' that launched the stratospheric rise of Oscar Murillo two years ago, so ...

3. The Edition is the new Delano.

Hotelier Ian Schrager first introduced his luxury brand to South Beach with the Delano in 1995. But this year, many of the parties moved upshore to his latest "lifestyle property," the Edition, which comes complete with a basement bowling alley and ice-skating rink. The hotel was out of the way, and its public spaces made it look something like a brothel from the future, but somehow, it managed to be the center of things almost every night (maybe thanks to the [free rooms](#) Schrager handed out to Marina Abramovic, Klaus Biesenbach, and friends?).

4. Dance is the next big thing.

One of the most-talked-about works of the week was Ryan McNamara's immersive (and very sold-out) performance, "MEEM 4 MIAMI: a Story Ballet About the Internet." Meanwhile,

Ryan Heffington, the choreographer behind Sia's "Chandelier" video, which has nearly 370 million YouTube views to date, staged a "punk-rock water ballet" at the Ritz Carlton South Beach, and the Shen Wei Dance Company performed at the annual Artsy dance party.

5. Younger artists stole the show — though the collectors calling those showing at ABMB and NADA “really emerging” artists are probably kidding themselves.

"One drawing was sold to another collector as my wife and I were holding it in our hands considering it," said the New York collector Peter Hort about his experience at NADA. He also noticed that Van Hanos and Jamian Juliano-Villani, who had work at Tanya Leighton's Art Basel booth, were "talked about everywhere." In other parts of the fair, the writer and dealer [Kenny Schachter](#) noticed a "tussle between two (very) determined buyers over a skinny little \$5,000 Katherine Bernhardt cigarette painting." Levin pointed to the Burundi-born artist Serge Alain Nitegeka as "someone whose work is also clearly headed for a big sloppy wet kiss from collectors, critics and curators alike."

6. Art Basel wore “its commercial heart on its sleeve.”

So said the art advisor Wendy Cromwell, who noted that dealers in Miami are brazen when it comes to hawking their biggest, brightest, and shiniest works. Once upon a time, galleries treated these kinds of events with ambivalence, and while those days are long long gone, 2014 did seem to mark a new level of unapologetic salesmanship. As our own Carl Swanson noted, [that \(self-\) reflective art](#) was in especially wide view. (Getting into the spirit of things, we snapped our own "selfie" with this Will Cotton [painting of Elle Fanning](#), which was the cover of *New York's* spring 2013 fashion issue.)

7. Sadie Coles is now a major, major blue-chip force.

The billionaire collectors Peter Brant and Steven Cohen were seen considering the thousands of green ceramic Urs Fischer raindrops suspended over the Sadie Coles HQ booth. The dealer has long been a respected figure on the London art scene, but Coles, who also shows Matthew Barney, Richard Prince, and Elizabeth Peyton, opened a new, 6,000-square-foot West End gallery last year and now seems poised to enter the hallowed ranks of blue-chip dealers like David Zwirner and Larry Gagosian.

8. Miami christened its new Institute of Contemporary Art.

"For me, one of the most exciting pieces of news is the birth of the Miami ICA, which opened with two shows by young artists, Andra Ursuta and Pedro Reyes," said the New Museum curator Massimiliano Gioni. Several trustees from the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami (MoCA NoMi) departed amid disputes with the city and formed the ICA this year. Although the older institution is keeping the majority of its collection, many of the best works [are said to be headed to the ICA](#), helmed by former wunderkind New York art critic Alex Gartenfeld, who's still in his 20s.

9. But MoCA NoMi is still kicking.

New director Babacar M'Bow has been rebranding the museum as the homegrown alternative to the ICA. The institution kicked off Basel Week with an exhibition of Caribbean artists.

10. People stopped being snarky about pop — real pop. Like Miley Cyrus pop.

The singer gave it her all at Jeffrey Deitch's big Miami comeback party, dancing inside a stuffed rainbow, smoking a joint, and twerking against Flaming Lips front man Wayne Coyne, who duetted with her onstage. We're not so sure she's an "outsider" artist on the level of Mike Kelley, as Deitch claimed. But she brought the right attitude, shouting at one point, "You thought this was a respected place where you could escape me?!" And folks in the audience seemed genuine when talking about her as a "real deal" performance artist. Which maybe shouldn't be too surprising, given how fully and unironically, unskeptically, un-eye-rollingly Kanye West and Kim Kardashian [were embraced down there](#).