

Galerie

4 Pleasant Surprises from Miami Art Week 2022

From exciting new discoveries at Art Basel Miami Beach to an unexpected performance, these are the moments that stood out

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Each December, Art Basel returns to Miami Beach with a consistent formula. This includes a reliably formidable roster of a few hundred galleries and international collectors; parties; brand collaborations; and terrible traffic. And somehow, year after year, this combination of predictable ingredients still manages to yield unpredictable results, often in the form of new discoveries, acquaintances, and situations that could only happen when the art world collides with Miami. Below, a list pleasant surprises from the most recent edition of Art Basel Miami Beach.

Finding New Favorites

Even in a crowded field of more than 280 exhibitors at the main Art Basel Miami Beach Fair, certain works always manage to grab your attention. On the splashier end, there was Jeff Koons' giant bowl of eggs, aptly titled *Bowl With Eggs* (1994-2009) at White Cube; Guillaume Bijl's fully active blackjack and roulette tables at Meredith Rosen; and at Perrotin, MSCHF's ATM that displayed your picture alongside the contents of your bank account. My personal favorites, however, were decidedly more subdued, like the brand new Cecily Brown in Paula Cooper's booth. For decades, the artist has been gently teasing figures out of the swirling ether of her canvas, and in *Ladybird Nudes* (2022), the figures finally emerge fully formed, albeit with facial features deformed by abstraction. Also new to me was a series of haunting, but also humorous '90s sculptures of shoes and teeth by the extremely underrated Rona Pondick. A dealer in the Steven Zevitas booth described her practice as parallel to Robert Goerber's, only without the proper recognition.

An Impromptu Performance

On Tuesday, my friend, the L.A. artist Lupe Rosales, called me with an unusual question: "Do you want to ride rafa?" She meant the artist rafa esparza, who had a performance scheduled as part of Art Basel's official program. In front of a small crowd, he would insert himself into a kinetic outdoor sculpture shaped like a gold and DayGlo-green motorcycle, effectively transforming himself into a "low-rider cyborg" that friends and family were invited to ride. Titled *Corpo RanfLA: Terra Cruiser* (2022), the

performance hints at cruising as a double-entendre; collective memory; and other references so specific to queer Chicano culture that they would take some time to unpack. My fellow riders included L.A. artists Gabriela Ruiz, Karla Canseco, Victor Barragán, and Rosales, all of whom had helped bring the piece together. As we each rode for one minute, esparza turned his golden front wheel, and his voice played softly through a pair of wireless headphones, recounting a story of creation and the passage of time. It was an intimate experience that felt historic, deeply moving, and definitive of a futurism uniquely shaped by East L.A.

A Vibe Shift in Collectible Design

The last time I attended Design Miami/, Art Basel's sister fair of collectible furniture, the booths were dominated by the staid work of midcentury French designers. Admittedly, that was years ago, and times have changed. This latest edition was arguably the strongest fair of Miami Art Week, where the offerings were high quality but also distinctly experimental. As an antidote to the monotony of blank art fair aisles, the booths offered colorful, texturally rich narratives, like the The Future Perfect's inviting vignette of dramatically shaggy wool carpet by Claudy Jongstra paired with a Chris Wolston bronze coffee table and plush boucle-and-aluminum club chairs (although you're not allowed to sit on anything). Also excellent was Johannesburg gallery Southern Guild's selection of African designers creating surreal, luxurious ceramics, lamps, and seating that fuse folklore with science fiction.

Serena Williams: Even More Beautiful in Real Life

The ideal night out in Miami unfolds in stages—the pre-dinner cocktail, dinner, the after-party, the labyrinthine nightclub Twist, then a late-night sandwich. Tuesday evening started Vogue Mexico’s reception at the opulent Setai to announce the Maestro Dobel Latinx Art Prize, the tequila maker’s new annual \$50,000 grant that culminates in a solo exhibition at El Museo del Barrio in New York. The mood escalated at Carbone, which Hauser & Wirth took over to celebrate Henry Taylor’s solo show at LA MOCA. Picture the artist chatting with statuesque Venus Williams in a crowded Old Hollywood dining room. The waiters are passing little plates of their coveted spicy rigatoni, and suddenly a Jonas Brother walks by. After a stop at Pace’s basement karaoke party, where former Art Basel director Marc Spiegler took a turn on the mic, the night ended at the faithful standby a La Sandwicherie, arguably the only place in Miami where you know exactly what you’re going to get.