

Robert Rauschenberg's
Story Brake (Urban Bourbon), 1993

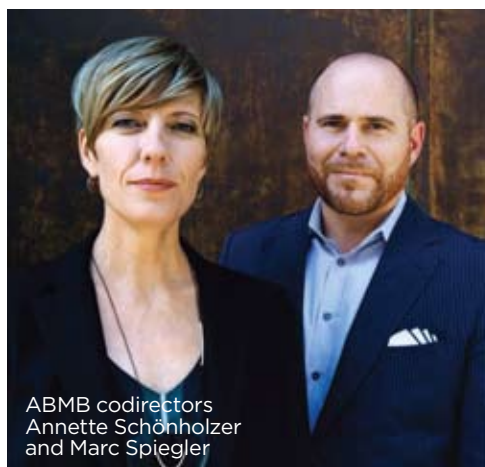


miami heat

ART-LOVING WASHINGTONIANS WILL HEAD TO FLORIDA THIS WINTER FOR THE COUNTRY'S PREMIER CONTEMPORARY FAIR. WE FIND OUT EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH. BY SUE HOSTETLER

It has been a good year—actually, a very good year—for the folks behind the prestigious Art Basel contemporary art shows. This summer record numbers flocked to the flagship Art Basel in Switzerland. The company then purchased the Hong Kong International Art Fair—the leading show in Asia—giving them critical leverage in the world's most rapidly expanding marketplace. And this December, Art Basel Miami Beach—sister event to the Swiss behemoth—will celebrate its 10th anniversary.

After launching in 2002, ABMB quickly established itself as the most significant art show in the Americas. Dealers, collectors, curators, and art enthusiasts of every type from all over the world descended en masse for the extravaganza, which has grown to include an international selection of more than 250 galleries, cutting-edge exhibitions, and performances featuring music, film, architecture, and design. The show has also helped transform Miami into a leading cultural capital that boasts some of the world's most ambitious private collections. This, coupled with its tropical climate and its location at the social and economic nexus of North America and Latin America, make Miami a perfect backdrop for the



ABMB codirectors
Annette Schönholzer
and Marc Spiegler

show and help draw an elite global audience.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden trustee Robert Lehrman, a Washington resident who has amassed an impressive collection of predominantly American and European contemporary art since he began collecting in the late '70s, is an ardent supporter of ABMB. “The success of the fair derives from a perfect storm,” Lehrman offers. “Great galleries showing a wide variety of high quality and interesting art, a great location, a great local scene, and local collectors who truly care that visitors are inspired. Perhaps what most distinguishes the fair itself is the broad range of quality works by the up-and-coming all the way to the tried-and-true.”

One of the annual highlights of ABMB is visiting the private collections, such as the Rubell Family Collection (housed in a former Drug Enforcement Agency warehouse) or Debra and Dennis Scholl's World Class Boxing. For a cultured show veteran like Lehrman, deciding where to spend his time is the toughest part. “The trio of de la Cruz, Margulies, and Rubell are so completely different that it's hard to choose a favorite,” he says. “But the new space for the de la Cruz collection is elegant

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Public art from Sicardi Gallery in Houston: *Color Aditivo*, by Carlos Cruz-Diez



Kai Althoff's *Untitled* (2010), at Gladstone Gallery

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and ethereal, and the collection looks inspiring. My favorite spot is the juxtaposition of Félix González-Torres (lightbulbs) and Hodges (flowers)—truly otherworldly!”

Though details for the special 10th anniversary celebration remain a closely guarded secret, we were able to sit down with show codirectors Marc Spiegler and Annette Schönholzer to glean a little insider information. artbaselmiamibeach.com



Robert and Aimee Lehrman

Art Basel Miami Beach has become the most important event in the US for the contemporary art world. To what do you attribute this success?

ANNETTE SCHÖNHOLZER: There are many reasons, although the foundation of the success has been the galleries that return every year and bring fantastic pieces. Many also mount carefully curated exhibitions for Art Kabinett in their booths and participate in additional sectors such as Art Public outdoors. The programming of Art Basel Conversations and the Art Film night also make the week rich in content and ideas. Equally important are the city of Miami Beach—which has always been supportive—and Miami’s private collections and remarkable museums, which enrich the experience by staging superb exhibitions every December. Seeing the cultural scene blossom in the Miami area over the past decade has been really rewarding, and we’re proud to have been part of that renaissance.

Have the quality and international makeup of the dealer applicant pool changed considerably over the years?

MARC SPIEGLER: We had very high application numbers and a high reapplication rate again this year. For European galleries, it is now the most show to do in America, and we have seen better and more Latin American galleries applying every year as the art scene has surged in places such as São Paulo, Mexico City, and Bogotá. It’s always a pleasure to see new dossiers coming in from places that used to be totally off the art world’s radar. **People have been wondering for years how the worldwide economic crisis would affect the overall art market. There has been attrition of galleries and smaller fairs, and yet ABMB remains a dealer favorite and show-sale results remain strong. Have you employed a specific approach that is responsible for this continued success?**

MS: We mainly kept doing what we have always done, which is to build the best possible platform for our galleries. Obviously, we also work hard to make every edition of Art Basel Miami Beach exciting for exhibitors, museums, curators, and visitors—and, of course, to bring the most important collectors

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—MARC SPIEGLER



Mary Mary gallery, in Glasgow, Scotland

and museum groups to the show. A huge factor on that front is the ever growing collector bases from Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Puerto Rico, who are all now regulars at Art Basel Miami Beach. During the most difficult year for the US economy, 2009, those collectors greatly compensated for the Americans who had slowed down their collecting.

What is the best and most efficient way for attendees to tackle the immense offerings of Art Basel Miami Beach?

AS: Download the [Art Basel Miami Beach iPhone] app, get a show guide, orient yourself, make a plan, and start to walk the halls. Be sure to visit the Art Galleries sector for top-level modern and contemporary art, along with Art Nova for two or three artists showing new work, and Art Positions, which features 16 major solo projects by emerging artists. Then leave the halls to go to Art Public—newly focused within the Collins Park area—and watch the Art Video program on the New World Centre projection wall. **CF**