



# miami heat

EVERYTHING THAT ART-LOVING LAS VEGANS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH—PLUS INSIDER INFORMATION ABOUT THIS YEAR'S BIG 10TH ANNIVERSARY BASH BY SUE HOSTETLER

It's been a good year—actually, a very good year—for the folks behind the prestigious Art Basel contemporary art shows. For starters, record numbers flocked to the 42nd annual Art Basel in Switzerland this summer. Then the company purchased the Hong Kong International Art Fair—the leading show in Asia—giving it critical leverage in that ever-expanding key market. And this December 1–4, Art Basel Miami Beach (ABMB)—sister event to the Swiss behemoth—celebrates its 10th anniversary.

Dealers, collectors, curators and art enthusiasts of every type from all over the world will descend on Miami Beach 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 helped transform Miami into a leading cultural capital that boasts some of the world's most ambitious private collections. This, coupled with the tropical climate and South Florida's location at the social and economic nexus of North America and South America, makes the city a perfect backdrop for the show and helps draw an elite global audience. ABMB is, without a doubt, the most significant art show in the Americas.

Esteemed art historian and curator Dr. Libby Lumpkin, who is often touted for her successes in bringing legitimate fine art and international attention to

Las Vegas, has attended both the Swiss and Florida shows several times. She feels that ABMB is simply not to be missed and that the city of Miami might be the great differentiator. “It would be nearly impossible to mount a fair in a community that had no ‘art culture’ from which to draw,” says Lumpkin, who helped Steve Wynn create the Bellagio Gallery and served as executive director of the now-shuttered Las Vegas Art Museum. “The fair needs the support

of the art professionals who are available through Miami's museums, universities and galleries. And Miami is a lovely and fun place to visit. Every time I have attended, the weather has been perfect; the warm nights are great for all the courtyard and beach parties that go on during the fair.”

It is the world-class art, however, that clearly Lumpkin really comes to see. “ABMB offers extensive programming,” Lumpkin says. “I highly recommend whatever talks are presented by artists, curators, critics or scholars. I suggest getting your tickets early—the lecture halls are packed.” What

does she make a point not to miss? “I would say that in Miami, the Rubell Collection is the most important,” says Lumpkin, referring to Don and Mera Rubell's private collection, which is housed in a 45,000-square-foot warehouse that once served as a Drug Enforcement Administration storage

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ABMB codirectors  
Annette  
Schönholzer and  
Marc Spiegler



*Black Wall Street*, 2006, by Mark Bradford, from the Scholl collection

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 facility. “During the fair, they have a curator draw from the collection to create an exhibition on one theme or another, which is always worth seeing. Probably the most sophisticated collection of important photography belongs to Dennis and Debra Scholl. They added a gallery-like wing onto their house, which is typically open to the public during the fair.”



Las Vegas art historian and curator Dr. Libby Lumpkin

The convention center remains where the real action is, often the scene of jaw-dropping, frenzied buying. Lumpkin recalls accompanying a collector to the show and eyeing a small sculpture with a price tag of \$450,000. “She wanted to think about it first,” Lumpkin says. “We walked through just two other booths when she decided to go back and make the purchase. It was already gone, snapped up like a scarf at a Bloomingdale’s sale.”

Though details for this December’s special 10th anniversary celebration remain a closely held secret, we were able to sit down with show codirectors Marc Spiegler and Annette Schönholzer for a little insider information.

**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:** 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 [a platform for smaller projects] 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 last decade has been really rewarding, and we’re proud to have been part of that renaissance.

**Has the quality or international makeup of the dealer applicant pool changed considerably over the years?**

**Marc Spiegler:** We had very high application numbers and a high



*Untitled*, 2010, by Kai Althoff

*“Seeing the cultural scene blossom in the Miami area over the last decade has been really rewarding.”*  
 —ANNETTE SCHÖNHOLZER

reapplication rate again this year. For European galleries, it is now the “must” show to do in America, and we have seen better and more Latin American galleries applying every year as the art scenes 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 art market. There has been attrition of galleries and smaller fairs, yet ABMB remains a dealer favorite as show-sale results remain strong. Have you employed a specific, strategic 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 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 Art Basel Miami Beach offers?**

**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 Center projection wall. ▾