

Art Agency, Partners


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Cracking the Crab—and the Code

Tips for Art Basel Miami Beach



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

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Loose Money

What some find distasteful about [Art Basel](#) in Miami Beach is also the reason this fair is successful. It benefits from being in tropical environment that is easy for Americans to get to and is a magnet for Europeans (who feel like they're on holiday a couple of weeks before they will be on holiday). The smell of money drips from the air, like sex. Works of art that have sat unsold for most of the year will this week find happy buyers (sometimes even to the same people who turned the works

down before).

Day One

Don't rush to the VIP lounge, because everyone is a VIP.

Counter tropical?

Some of the best art at the fair is by European artists, being shown by European dealers. Often, though, this work goes under-recognized: maybe it just doesn't translate into Miami-ese.

Existential question

You can't seem to get a decent lunch at the fair which begs the question: why can't we get the wurst over here from the mother fair?

Break out of your shell

Spend at least half a day doing something completely unrelated to art. There is more than one way to merengue in Miami, and it's worth checking out all of them.

On hotels

I used to stay at the not ready for prime-time Mandarin Oriental, which had the appeal of not being in South Beach and therefore a refuge from the 24-hour vibrations and rumble. During my last stay there, I placed a breakfast order for the following morning, put a do not disturb order on my phone, and then was awakened at 2am by Yolanda from catering asking me when I wanted my grapefruit juice and sliced pineapple delivered. Service is defined differently in Miami.

Cracking It

Go to Joe's Stone Crab at least once—and go with someone who knows how to crack both the crab, and the code to getting a table.

Avoid "intimacy"

Don't go to any dinners if the invitation mentions an intimate seated dinner (which usually means 200 people).

I stay local; you may choose otherwise

I don't go to satellite fairs anymore. There are so many in Miami this week and my brain doesn't have the capacity to absorb what I am looking at when I see so much art on so many walls in such a short period of time.

Hint

If, like me, you are flying home before the weekend, then you should check out the excellent Cuban restaurant at the airport.

Expect some surprises

Miami Basel is the one fair where I have consistently bought the work of a young artist whose work I didn't know before. Somehow, there is always something new to discover in Miami.