



The Artists Everyone Talked about during Art Basel in Miami Beach

Written by Alina Cohen

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If every edition of Art Basel in Miami Beach was titled like a *Friends* episode, the 2019 edition was indisputably “The One with the Banana.”

Maurizio Cattelan

taped the fruit to [Perrotin](#)’s booth, creating a truly bonkers frenzy. The work, titled *Comedian* (2019), landed a front-page *New York Post* story and spurred so many selfies that the gallery eventually had to put up stanchions to control the queue of people who wanted a picture with the banana. Perrotin started a meme account on Instagram. Three editions, priced between \$120,000 and \$150,000 sold. On Saturday, performance artist David Datuna tore the banana off the wall and ate it. Perrotin replaced the banana, then announced on Sunday morning that it was removing the artwork from its booth because it was disrupting the fair environment. Gallerist Emmanuel Perrotin himself then ate the banana. And in the empty space, a man vandalized the booth with lipstick, writing “Epstien [sic] didn’t kill himself.” Police arrested him on charges of criminal mischief. But enough about the banana. Here’s a list of the other artists everyone was talking about during Art Basel in Miami Beach.

Theaster Gates

In the Meridians section, a new film by Theaster Gates made its East Coast debut. Titled *Dance of Malaga* (2019), the piece premiered in Gates’s solo presentation at Paris’s Palais de Tokyo this past February and tells a distinctly American story. It focuses on the titular island, off the coast of Maine, where a small, interracial community thrived throughout the 1800s. In 1912, the state evicted all the inhabitants, hoping to turn Malaga into a tourist destination. The scheme failed, and the island remains uninhabited today. Gates interprets the story with found footage; a soundtrack by his own musical collective, The Black Monks; and shots of dancer Kyle Abraham performing on the empty island.

“It’s mind-blowingly beautiful and important, and it was so wonderful to see it again,” said Patton Hindle, senior director of arts at Kickstarter, who first saw the work at Palais de Tokyo. Hindle was one of many fans—by the end of the Meridians preview on Tuesday evening, two of the three editions were already on reserve.

David Hammons

The famously reclusive David Hammons has made himself surprisingly visible in 2019. In May, Hauser & Wirth opened a sprawling exhibition of his work at its Los Angeles gallery. More recently, the Whitney

Museum launched a trailer for the artist's forthcoming, permanent public artwork, *Day's End* (2020), which will open next fall. Hammons himself appears in the video, which discusses his attempt to rethink New York history and the country's approach to monuments as he creates a skeleton pier off Manhattan's west side. Hammons also granted *New Yorker* writer Calvin Tomkins a rare interview for a profile which runs in print this week. While Hammons's work has appeared intermittently at art fairs, that context is still jarring. This year, both Mnuchin Gallery and Hauser & Wirth presented pieces by Hammons. Writer and curator Antwaun Sargent noted that *African American Flag* (1990; sold for \$1.5 million) and *Untitled (Silver Tapestry)* (2008; sold for \$2.4 million) stopped him "dead in [his] tracks." They were shocking to see, Sargent said, given Hammons's "longstanding distaste of the market, museums, press, and the art-world audience. Perhaps, in his eighth decade, he has decided to do things differently? We may never know."

Amoako Bofo

A stroll through collectors Don and Mera Rubell's brand-new museum in Miami's Allapattah neighborhood gives visitors the opportunity to see contemporary art's greatest hits. From a Jeff Koons pool toy to Charles Ray's infamous sculpture of himself pleasuring himself; from two immersive Yayoi Kusama works to a Cindy Sherman film still, the masterworks on view solidify the Rubells's position as two of the country's greatest tastemakers.

In November, the couple announced that their 2019 artist-in-residence would be Ghana-born painter and portraitist Amoako Bofo. He follows an esteemed lineage of Rubell residents, including Sterling Ruby, Oscar Murillo, and Jonathan Lyndon Chase. It's no surprise that collectors went crazy for his work at Art Basel in Miami Beach. For her debut presentation at the fair, Chicago gallerist Mariane Ibrahim exhibited six of Bofo's canvases. All sold, for prices ranging from \$30,000 to \$45,000. "We have an immense waiting list," said gallery representative Emma McKee.

Lita Albuquerque

Before Art Basel in Miami Beach's VIP preview was over on Wednesday, Kohn Gallery had already sold four gold-leaf-on-resin, pigment-on-panel works by Los Angeles-based artist Lita Albuquerque, for figures between \$35,000 and \$75,000. They all resemble shining celestial bodies, radiating against dark backgrounds. The gallery, in fact, knocked it out of the park as it sold a sexy, colorful Sophia Narrett embroidery to a prominent Northeast museum and placed works by Heidi Hahn, Chiffon Thomas, Octavio Abúndez, and Caroline Kent with institutional collections as well.

Woody De Othello



Woody De Othello's eight-foot-tall, eight-foot-wide bronze-and-enamel sculpture of a distorted fan thrilled Meridians visitors. Presented by Jessica Silverman Gallery and Karma, the work sold in three editions in dark blue, orange, and yellow, to private U.S. collections, for \$175,000 each. De Othello is best known for his colorfully glazed ceramics, which often resemble tweaked domestic objects—a melting remote control or a strangely proportioned telephone, for example. Jessica Silverman Gallery did its best Art Basel in Miami Beach business ever, selling 48 works total within the first three days.

Ed Clark

Art advisor Lisa Schiff named Ed Clark, who passed away in October, as the most prominent artist at Art Basel in Miami Beach. Hauser & Wirth (which represents the artist's estate), Kayne Griffin Corcoran, Mnuchin Gallery, and Richard Gray Gallery all exhibited his lush, brushy abstractions. Schiff purchased a 2004 canvas on behalf of a private client. She said the art world is "rewriting art history, rewriting the canon" as it recognizes more artists of color; interest in Clark, she believes, is no passing fad. Schiff also noted the prevalence of paintings by Sam Gilliam, another African American Abstract Expressionist who's gotten his due within the past decade. Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, David Kordansky Gallery, and Pace Gallery all exhibited his work. Schiff purchased a 1970 Gilliam canvas on behalf of a California collector.