

Galerie

Jessica Silverman: "The Long-Awaited Return of Art Basel Miami Beach Makes a Splash"

By Osman can Yerebakan

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Art Basel Miami Beach Convention Center. Photo: Courtesy of Art Basel Miami Beach

The first in-person edition of the fair in Miami, which remains open until December 4, impresses with scale, sales, and attendance

The typical jadedness among the art world crowd about attending yet another art fair was nowhere to be seen in the first day of [Art Basel Miami Beach](#) on November 30. Instead, an excitement to return to the sun-soaked city for the biggest art week in the United States was visible even behind the masks during the vernissage. Different hugs of choice, marathons between the aisles, and smartphones raised in front of the top-notch art have brought back the long-missed fair rituals.

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508



An installation view of Almine Rech at Art Basel Miami Beach. PHOTO: © ART BASEL

With its endless summer and laid-back attitude, Miami is rarely a hard sell, but the fair's promise of the *crème de la crème* of contemporary art is its true attraction for thousands of attendees. The mammoth affair's first in-person iteration since 2019 exceeds expectations in scale and ambition—253 galleries shipped their most prized pieces from all over the globe to the booths lined inside the Convention Center's soaring interior. The removal of travel restriction for the Europeans eased many galleries' efforts to participate in the fair as well as adding the event to many foreign collectors' agendas.

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SILVERMAN**

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jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508



Installation view of *Block Universe* (2021) at Pace at Art Basel Miami Beach PHOTO: © ART BASEL

Between the flowing champagne and chats about what parties to attend, the art on view ranges from historic pieces to the newest works fresh from artist studios. In addition to the usual suspects, an impressive 43 galleries made their Art Basel Miami Beach debut, including several emerging galleries from the U.S. and abroad. Unsurprisingly, NFTs occupied the interests and curiosities of many as the new collecting frenzy made its Art Basel Miami Beach debut. [Pace Gallery](#) collaborated with DRIFT for an NFT work inspired by the Dutch duo's augmented reality series, *Block Universe* (2021) about the solar system. DRIFT's interpretation of NFT both as a technological challenge and a new form of visual language is the next step in their boundary-pushing approach to art and technology—currently proven by their hypnotizing exhibition "[Fragile Future](#)" at The Shed.

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SILVERMAN**

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jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508



An installation staged by Brendan Fernandes. PHOTO: © ART BASEL. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MONIQUE MELOCHE GALLERY, CHICAGO

The most hyped section in the last iteration was Meridians, which is dedicated to large-scale works. Curated by Museo Tamayo director Magalí Arriola, this year's presentation occupies a spacious corner with individual works by 25 artists. Chicago-based gallery [Monique Meloche](#) exhibits Brendan Fernandes's large-scale kinetic sculptures inspired by Minimalism, ballet, and S&M. The artist's many demurely erotic sculptures are activated by dancers, and the opening day was no exception. Engaging with the works' smooth surfaces, performers slowly formed their bodies in response to Fernandes's sculptures in front of an intrigued crowd.

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SILVERMAN**

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jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508



Yinka Shonibare, *Moving Up*, 2021. PHOTO: © ART BASEL

Yinka Shonibare's masterful sculpture of the Great Migration with [James Cohan](#) sits amidst large scale wall-hung pieces by Howardena Pindell, Sadie Laska, and Todd Gray. The scene-stealer sculpture embodies the drift of six million Black Americans from the south to other parts of the country. The Brit swathed three figures in his signature Dutch wax fabric, creating a sensation of hope and anticipation through color and pattern.

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SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508



Elizabeth Murray, *The New World*, 2006. PHOTO: © 2021 THE MURRAY-HOLMAN FAMILY TRUST / ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK COURTESY OF THE MURRAY-HOLMAN FAMILY TRUST AND GLADSTONE GALLERY

Across the booths, artworks compete with Meridians in scale. Parisian gallery [Templon](#) delivers an interesting outlook of America with a large-scale painting by Kehinde Wiley, George Segal's dark-blue sculpture of a life-size human figure, and Michael Ray Charles's two paintings that make sharp commentaries about the history of race in the United States. Another Parisian powerhouse, [Perrotin](#)'s booth bursts with a who's who offering, including *Eroded Porsche 911* (2021), Daniel Arsham's life-size car sculpture treated with the artist's signature crystallized erosion, which sold to a local Miami collector for just over \$500,000.

[David Lewis Gallery](#) also reserved a portion of its booth to the power of femininity with Mary Beth Edelson's *Kali Bobbitt* (1994), a captivating sculpture of a woman dressed in lingerie and sharp objects. The late artist's transformation of a storefront mannequin into a six-armed fighter who carries her weapons around her lace underwear is a showstopper. Another iconic female artist is Elizabeth Murray, whose energetic painting, titled *The New World* (2006) is showcased at [Gladstone Gallery](#). Building on the gallery's current solo exhibition for the late painter, the work

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challenges form and narrative with Murray's architectural take on the canvas—a potpourri of visual traits that dare to be whimsical and even humorous.



Rodolpho Parigi, *Audrey*, 2021. PHOTO: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND NARA ROESLER

An exquisite use of color is also notable at Nara Roesler's booth with Radolpho Parigi's *Audrey* (2021), a monumental portrait of a young woman whose face is washed in a medley of blue and red lights. The work's nocturnal effect is a common thread for the Brazilian artist who makes mysteriously erotic paintings of bodies completely clad in latex.

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SILVERMAN**

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A view of Jessica Silverman's booth at Art Basel Miami. PHOTO: MARK BLOWER. COURTESY OF JESSICA SILVERMAN

There are also modest-sized gems waiting to be discovered. Take, for example, San Francisco's [Jessica Silverman](#) which features an intimate painting by the West Coast artist Clare Rojas amidst works by Woody De Othello, Rashaad Newsome, and Matthew Angelo Harrison. Rojas's detailed depiction of a surreal scene in which a man walks his dog while the canine's leash is wrapped around a woman intrigues with its dreamlike moment and the artist's detailed effort over the canvas.

From concerts by Alicia Keys or Troye Sivan to panels about future of the art market, Art Basel Miami Beach is once again a feast for the eye and the mind. Given the general appetite for in-person interactions, the fair and the ample calendar throughout the week proves the art world's indelible social aspect which thrives on the human connection as much as the art on display.

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