



CRITIC'S VIEW: The Party Party: Experiencing Art Miami

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by James Croak

Driving from the highly coordinated [Art Basel](#) to the satellite Art Miami fair is like having dinner at the parsonage and dessert at Animal House.

The age drops by half, the volume doubles, refinement is a third cousin who fell asleep in the car, and manners rode in the trunk. Parents are in Belize, the uncle-in-charge is toking upstairs, and the house was going to be razed anyway. Any art theory candidate here would have to be stumping for a political splinter group known as The Party Party.

Art Miami has the street cred of being the original art fair, and is now returning for a 26th raucous installment in 200,000 square feet located in the Wynwood Arts District. After a big kickoff with Art Week Miami, Merrill Lynch went long with a Pérez Art Museum benefit and VIP party. Art Miami, with its sister fairs Context and Aqua Art, brings together a staggering 2,327 artists from 83 countries, spread among galleries from 29 countries and viewed by 85,000 people. That's a lot of art fair and there is something here for everyone, most at full volume.

The only sin at this fair is to be boring, and there were few miscreants in evidence. One standout is the indefatigable Bernice Steinbaum, who is showing a massive ostrich by Enrique Gomez de Molina that took up most of her booth. Her theme is "The Peaceable Kingdom" and front and center on her booth is a large type excerpt from the book of Isaiah:



Verse from the Book of Isaiah in Bernice Steinbaum
Gallery's booth.

Many teens seemed puzzled by the verse and rocked back and forth on their hoverboards while taking in the dream of the Old Testament, wondering aloud if Isaiah got it from John Lennon.



"Ostrich" by Enrique Gomez de Molina exhibited by Bernice

Steinbaum Gallery.

At roughly 74 Bernice is still going full on. She used her PhD in art history in the service of her early support for women artists and artists of color, before the rest of the clan even knew that change was needed. A new documentary about Ms Steinbaum entitled “Bernice” is appearing at film festivals and racking up [awards](#) worldwide. “Life begins at 70,” Marcel Duchamp once announced, and for Bernice life in her 70s may have begun as a niche but has since expanded to fame.

Dressing up as a famous painting is a sub-subculture that dates to the 1800s.



Festival of Arts/Pageant of the Masters Facebook Photo.

I never much understood the attraction, but Art Miami has a great addition to this culture in the form of a video installation entitled *Van Gogh's Bedroom*, 2015 by Gregory Scott. As legend has it, Vincent Van Gogh created a painting of his bedroom in Arles—three times actually—while waiting for a visit from painter Paul Gauguin.



“Bedroom in Arles” (first version) by Van Gogh, 1888.

<https://hamptonsarthub.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Van-Goghs-Bedroom-2015-SD.mp4>

Here Scott painstakingly reproduces the bedroom as Van Gogh drew it, adding some great humor around 2 minutes and 45 seconds in, when another painting by Van Gogh, the Postman Joseph Roulin, opens the window and passes through a letter.

Klein Sun Gallery of New York City is exhibiting a remarkable painting by Ling Jian entitled ominously “Air Purifier,” depicting a worried young woman dolled up a bit too much with an anxious look that says she would rather be somewhere else. It is a large foreboding image and asks lot of questions? A lady of the night? There out of obligation? By force? Its many dimensions and queries make it a successful art form.



“Air Purifier” by Ling Jian, 2015.

I noticed modernist works by Lynn Chadwick (1914-2003) at both Art Basel and Art Miami, leading me to believe that there might be some market movement for the work of this modernist master.

Chadwick was a British sculptor and a contemporary of Henry Moore. His faceless figures can be found in every major museum in the world. Chadwick roamed in and out of figuration all of his life, even for a while creating stabiles that could be mistaken for pieces by Alexander Calder. But it is his block-faced figures that he will always be known for, depicting an anonymous man and woman in repose. There are several examples at Art Miami offered by the Osborne Samuel Gallery of London.



Bronze Sculpture by Lynn Chadwick.

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BASIC FACTS: Art Miami continues through December 6, 2015. The Art Miami Pavilion is located at 3101 NE 1st Avenue Miami, FL 33137. www.artmiamifair.com.

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