



How to Be a Miami Art Week VIP (Or Feel Like One)

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by Marlene Sholod

If you are a credentialed VIP for art world parties, then Miami Art Week, also known as [Art Basel Miami Beach](#) (ABMB) Week, is an oyster and you are its pearl. There are amazing gatherings—ranging from the small and intimate to shoulder-to-shoulder—in luxurious, architecturally over-the-top venues with abundant food and libations, guests in elaborate outfits and, oh yes, stunning objets d’art.

If you haven’t received your VIP invites yet from exhibitors, curators, gallerists, or fair and event sponsors, fear not: there are still opportunities to be in the stratosphere of the art scene, and to be seen as well.

Miami Museums

One savvy solution is to take advantage of special membership perks available from local museums. For certain levels of membership, the [Bass Museum](#) (whose reopening has been postponed until spring 2017) is offering the Bass Art Pass 2016. The pass provides VIP status at more than 10 satellite art fairs as well as invitations to special events. Members at the Diplomat level of the Wolfsonian-FIU can attend their “More is More” reception on Friday, December 2, 2016 from 8 to 11 p.m. and enjoy Miami’s largest public art installation, created by Dutch contemporary artist [Christie van der Haak](#).

The [Perez Art Museum Miami](#) (PAMM) offers eligible members an Art Fair Survival Kit with special event invitations and passes to art fairs. Also, open to PAMM’s sustaining and above members and ABMB, Design Miami, and Art Miami VIP cardholders, PAMM’s December 1, 2016 party from 9 p.m. until midnight will include performances by Cashmere Cat, Jillionaire, and Miami’s own Uncle Luke. But, even if you miss the party, anyone enjoying a cocktail on PAMM’s terrace on a sultry tropical night—looking out at beautiful Biscayne Bay bejewelled with illuminated cruise ships—can feel like a jillion dollars.



PAMM Terrace. Courtesy of the museum. Photo by worldredeye.com.

Art Fairs

The main event at Miami Art Week, of course, is Art Basel Miami Beach (ABMB), the firstborn child of Switzerland's prestigious Art Basel. This is the 15th edition of this enormous art fair, and, as happens at many quinceañeras, it's showing off a growth spurt: 21 additional world class international galleries, bringing the total number of exhibitors to 269. And despite Miami Beach still being considered a zone of active Zika transmission (45 days must pass without any local transmissions to be cleared), Miami Beach Convention Center construction, and the recent election, 98 percent of exhibitors have reapplied from the previous year.

If you're thinking that ABMB's VIP and Collectors' previews offer fountains of champagne, mountains of food, and A-list entertainment, you're mistaken. They're not even evening events anymore. The real treat here is getting first dibs on seeing/acquiring A-list art while in an A-list crowd of artists, collectors, curators, critics, gallerists, and celebrities. And, of course, the not-even-guiltily pleasure of admiring the fashionably turned out crowd, many of them as memorable as a masterpiece.



Art Basel Miami Beach. Courtesy Art Basel.

Some of ABMB's [related events](#) are open to the public and listed on their [website](#). A breath of fresh air (literally) is their Public Sector's free [Opening Night](#) on Wednesday, November 30, 2016 from 8 to 10 p.m. in Collins Park. Special performances will complement the outdoor site-specific installations of 20 international artists presented in collaboration with the Bass Museum and curated by Nicholas Baume, Director and Chief Curator of Public Art Fund, NY. Inspired by the late David Bowie, this year's theme is "Ground Control."

[Design Miami](#), ABMB's sister fair, has invite-only preview hours. Preview Day is Tuesday, November 29, 2016, with the Collectors' Preview from noon to 6 p.m. and the Building Legacy Opening Night Preview from 6 to 8 p.m. The VIP Preview is the day after, November 30, 2016 from 10 a.m. noon. But, across the bay in the Miami Design District, birthplace of Design Miami, luxurious, on-trend design and fashion showrooms extend their hours and host openings, many open to the public, almost every night. Critical mass is Thursday evening, December 1, 2016 when the streets will teem with the design-conscious.

[Art Miami](#) (by the same folks who bring you [Art Southampton](#)) actually predates ABMB. It reinvented itself as one of the largest contemporary and modern art fairs (attended by more than 82,000 people last year) and has become the hub of several art fairs (including its sister fair, Context, and Aqua) in midtown Miami. Its VIP preview on Tuesday, November 29 from 5:30 to 10 p.m. is open only to guests of participating galleries, curators, and Christie's.

Neighboring [Wynwood Arts District](#), with its myriad emerging art galleries, wall art, and trendy

restaurants, will be especially festive because of the CDC's lifting of the Zika active transmission advisory for this area. (Miami Beach was not Zika-free for the required 45 days in time for Miami Art Week.) Life has returned to its colorful streets; outdoor venues are open and al fresco events have resumed.

Local Color

[Wynwood Walls](#), the outdoor art museum (and heart and soul of the neighborhood since its creation by the Goldman family in 2009,) is hosting an Opening Night on Tuesday, November 30, 2016 for its double-entendre "Fearless," a collection of new wall murals by internationally-renowned street artists. It's VIP by invite from 9 to 11 p.m., then open to the public until 2 a.m.

Back on Miami Beach, the once-sleepy Mid-Beach has woken up in a big way thanks to the new [Faena Arts District](#). Its free Faena Art opening begins Sunday, November 27, 2016 from 3 to 6 p.m. with "[Tide by Side](#)," a large-scale public performance on Collins Avenue from 32nd to 36th Streets, including artists such as Carlos Betancourt and performers such as Los Carpinteros and the Miami Gay Men's Chorus.

On November 28, 2016 the invite-only inaugural event at the new Faena Forum features the world premiere of "[Once With Me, Once Without Me](#)" by choreographer Pam Tanowitz with architect Sho Shigematsu/OMA; tickets are available for purchase for the [next night](#). You can attend [Madonna's Raising Malawi benefit](#) on Friday, December 2, 2016 with a ticket starting at \$5,000.

A popular way to decompress from Miami Art Week in a beautiful, outdoor setting is the [Sagamore Hotel's](#) invite-only Saturday brunch. The hotel's new owners are going all out with a program of live music and art. Alternately, free and open to the public, the [Frost Art Museum's Breakfast in the Park](#) on Sunday, December 4, 2016 is a worthwhile trek, combining cuisine and culture. Sculptor Judy Plaff is guest speaker.

These are just some of the hundreds of fantastic events that make Miami Art Week a unique, 24/7 celebration of art and the reason why savvy fair-goers soon swap their sky-high Loubutins for more foot-friendly fare!