



## Art Basel in a Dampened, Post-Sandy Mood

By [Alexandra Peers](#)



The Art Basel Miami Beach art fair, and all of its related and ancillary events and adventures, ended its eleventh go-round last weekend. But this year marked a sea change in mood and style: the shock of Hurricane Sandy (which battered the Chelsea galleries) lingered, the parties were in a lower key (with the exception of those at the aggressively elite Soho House), and the installations were on a smaller scale. Here, the five stories of ABMB 2012.

### **Warhol, 2012**

What do you do when the most critically reviled art exhibition of the year is coming to your institution? Worry – and scramble.

The director of Pittsburgh's Andy Warhol Museum, Eric Shiner, has the dubious distinction of being the next to show the Metropolitan Museum of Art's "Regarding Warhol." [New York magazine's Jerry Saltz](#) said there was "a shallow, pandering fecklessness to the pseudo-extravaganza" — and he was among the kinder critics. The show closes month's end in New York and opens in Pittsburgh, its only other venue, in February.

"We're going to completely rethink the installation, it will be quite different," said Shiner, in Miami to host the museum's party at the former Versace Mansion. "It was one person's viewpoint...and there were certainly lots and lots of omissions." He said those can be rectified at the Warhol, where the show will be expanded, drawing from the museum's own collection, to take up all seven floors of the institution.

He anticipates the show will be a "huge draw" for his museum, and notes that Warhol's recent blockbuster sales at auction indicate no end to demand. "So many people said it was going to flood the market" when the Warhol Foundation announced it was selling its inventory, "but exactly the opposite happened," said Shiner. "People will fall in love with the image they bought and, as their fortunes grow, they may want more." At the party, the museum sold out all 20 benefit editions of photographer William John Kennedy's 1964 series of photographs of Warhol at \$20,000 apiece.

### **The Art and the Sales**

There was very little heroic art at ABMB 2012, few roaring works with big ideas. Instead, there was a small-scale delicacy to what ringed the fairs: artworks of glass, text, feathers, or made of thin, delicate wire; art about balance or construction. Lots of art with water images; lots of digital and video art.

Sales-wise, "[Work going for] under \$200,000 was fine, but there was difficulty for dealers over," said gallerist Lucy Mitchell-Innes, who did well with a booth of works by mostly younger female artists, including Catherine Opie's photographs of Liz Taylor's closet. Among the fastest sales were in Pace's booth, where crowds encircled a Michal Rovner work that looked like a painting but is a video, a fact discovered as tiny characters inside walk across the "canvas." (The \$150,000 edition sold out.) Sean Kelly "sold every Terence Koh we brought," and was so busy by week's end he was selling works by showing buyers images of his New York inventory on iPads, he said. Eli Broad's purchase of a circa-\$5-million Jeff Koons at Gagosian was one of the top buys but rumors that Koons is defecting to David Zwirner, at least for one exhibition next year, got more attention.

There were also sales of works by Albert Oehlen, Barbara Kruger, Tracey Emin, Anish Kapoor, Anselm Kiefer, Alexander Calder, Los Carpinteros, and Richard Prince — who introduced his own soft drink in collaboration with Arizona.

Hans-Kristian Hoejsgaard, CEO of the cigar-maker Davidoff, was in town to announce an artist's residency program that will bring Dominican Republic

artists to Williamsburg's ICSP, among other spots. He ended up buying "Spacebubble" by Katja Loher from New York gallery Scaramouche at the Pulse Art Fair. "It's a complete departure from our normal art-buying" of paintings, he said, but he and his wife liked "the dialogue between themes of nature and technology."

### **The parties: a new mood**

The SoHo Beach House is the most exalted and oft-touted party location, but getting in was a chore, a gauntlet of checkpoints, each armed by young iPad carrying greeters demanding names again and again. Even Amy Sacco was "S-a-..." Once inside, you felt like Julia Roberts being ignored in a Beverly Hills boutique in *Pretty Woman*. (You so wanted to return the next day with Richard Gere, or, better yet, Gagosian, and say "Big mistake.") Worse, erosion has steeply sloped SoHo's beach, so the evenings were broken up with the sounds of slightly drunk high-heeled socialistas sliding booty-first into the sand (*swoosh, plunk*, "Ohhhhh"), all scored to Michael Jackson music, which by day five, gets tiresome.

For sheer excellence, the best party was probably the 60th anniversary all-white dinner for Italy's Moncler coats held at, of all places, at a parking garage designed by starchitects Herzog & de Meuron. Hosted seven stories above the city in an open-air concrete platform, it was all fog and headlights, free puffy white capes and mirrored sunglasses. The gorgeous crowd shone like a vampire family.

Most of the other good events, in a big departure from past years, were tiny and low-key. Think Krug's two-table family-style dinner for Adrien Grenier's green charity/initiative [SHFT.com](http://SHFT.com) (afterwards, he delayed nightclubbing and took his Mom home), or a series of lush events at the new James Royal Palms geared to foodies. Ballroom Marfa in the poolside Tiki room of the SLS Hotel was the best example of the new, more restrained party direction: Comfy chairs, great music, tight guest list. Marfa, an alternative art space in West Texas (Minimalist king Donald Judd was its founder) had Barclays as a co-sponsor, so drinks, seafood and burgers descended constantly. They are apparently still rich in Texas.

### **The Met's Campbell Talks – and Talks Back**

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's former director Philippe de Montebello never made it to Art Basel in its first decade, but his successor, Tom Campbell, showed up at the main fair for a panel on "The Encyclopedic Museum" Friday. There, Campbell promised more contemporary art at the museum and said that Janet Cardiff's contemporary 40-speaker installation — each speaker representing one voice in a 15th-century sacred motet — will be installed at the Cloisters next year in celebration of the uptown branch's 75th anniversary. He also talked about the conflicts of interest inherent in doing fashion exhibitions sponsored by the brand itself. (The Met has gotten criticism because Cartier, Dior, Tiffany, Faberge have all sponsored shows at the Met that featured their objects, and Conde Nast has paid for others that featured

its advertisers.) “We never give up curatorial say,” Campbell stressed. He also touted the massive growth of the Met’s website and annual attendance (45 million web visitors and 6.3 million museum visitors, respectively, with Chinese tourists the fastest-growing demo) and his insomnia since taking over the job in 2009. One thing keeping him awake: Congress possibly enacting cutbacks in tax breaks for art donations. “That could have huge repercussions for us,” he said.

There was a bit of smack-talking by LA County Museum of Art head Michael Govan, also on the panel. Govan, who was rumored to be up for the Met job, said he worried that the Met and museums like it are “products of colonialism...products of war and pillage” since wealthy Western nations had amassed trophies from other cultures and brought them back to museums. Campbell countered, “We sometimes go far in political correctness. I have no doubt or shame about [the museum and its holdings]. I’m really proud of it.” Take that, L.A.

### **A Jangled Mood**

The ABMB fair itself may still be the best, per-square-inch, high-density contemporary art experience in the country, but 2012 felt like an off year. With many of the players from New York, the aftermath of Sandy — not to mention the reality of the recession — hung over everything. Jennifer Rubell had to cancel her annual performance art brunch, a hugely popular event open to the public, because elements of the installation in her New York studio were destroyed by the storm, she said. There were spats between rival satellite art fairs (The New Art Dealers Alliance tried to bar its members from showing at an upstart fair on the beach called Untitled) and a spate of prominent no-shows. As if to underscore the unsettled mood, outside the Vanity Fair party one collector was robbed by a purse-snatching bicyclist.

However, the week was far from dead: SoHo Beach House was the fashion hangout and Delano the art one, with Klaus Biesenbach holding MoMA/P.S. 1’s benefit for the Rockaways there, Tim Nye overseeing a stylish bungalow lounge, and Lawrence Benenson, newest board member of MoMA, genially hosting friends at Delano’s Bianca restaurant (On menu: \$58 truffled pasta). What one Hollywood publicist dubbed “Art Boozle” shined in the eyes of a prominent first-timer, Diane von Furtstenberg. She was in Miami hosting a lobster lunch to introduce her new DVF-designed bottle of Evian. She had never been to Art Basel before, and had been reluctant to attend, she said. But she ended up doing some art buying (She singled out Tornabuoni Gallery’s booth of Lucio Fontanas for particular praise.) “Art Basel Miami? I thought I was going to hate it,” she said. “And I love it.”



And any ennui in the art world did not affect the travel plans of the celebrity world. For those keeping score of celebrity attendees, here is an incomplete list: A-Rod, Rachel Maddow, Owen Wilson, Lenny Kravitz, Beyonce, Kanye, Sean Combs, Chelsea Handler, Kellan Lutz, Martha Stewart, Marcia Cross, Will Ferrell, Stephen Dorff, Dita von Teese, Jane Seymour, Kelly Osbourne, Julian Lennon, Pharrell Williams, Marg Helgenberger, Jeremy Piven, Kardashians Kourtney and Kim.