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Fair City: Art in Miami

3:53 pm Thursday Dec 3, 2009 by [Paul Laster](#)

Art Basel's decision to choose Miami Beach for the location of an American outpost for its high-powered Swiss art fair was pure genius. Now in its eighth edition, [Art Basel Miami Beach](#) continues to be the most exciting place for viewing modern and contemporary art and for networking and partying with fellow players. Add the numerous satellite fairs, museum and gallery exhibitions, and special events to the mix and it makes for a dynamic week of art, sand, sun, and fun.

More than 250 galleries from 33 countries offer some 2,000 artists in the various sections of the fair this year. The layout has been revamped, and the Art Positions section, which consists of younger galleries showing cutting-edge projects, has been brought into the main hall from the shipping containers at Collins Park. The park site, which leads to the beach, has been renamed Oceanfront, where fair curators and Creative Time are collaborating to present a lively mix of free talks, videos, and performances. LA artist Pae White has turned Oceanfront into a visually dynamic miniature city that winds through the sand.



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Some of the highlights of ABMB 2009 are Agathe Snow's wacky assemblages, made from found materials, at James Fuentes in Art Positions; Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian's mosaic mirrors at The Third Line and Zach Feuer Gallery's pairing of expressionistic figurative painter Dana Schutz with twisted-tale, animation filmmaker Nathalie Djurberg in Art Nova, which features work from the past two years; and Wim Delvoye's gothic-style, cut-steel sculptures of towers and cement mixers at Sperone Westwater in the Art Kabinett, which offers small solo shows within the context of a gallery's booth.

Outside the hall, the Art Projects section places 13 public works in Miami Beach, with standouts including Cristina Lei Rodriguez's Greenhouse, which is filled with exotic, tropical sculptures, and is sited behind the Bass Museum, and Rirkrit Tiranvanija's Friday night performance at the W South Beach Hotel, where models will parade through the lobby to the pool while wearing new t-shirts reproduced from old ones that were found around the world.

Elsewhere, the satellite fairs have reinvigorated themselves most this year by changing venues. [Nada](#) has moved to the Deauville Beach Resort, where it is showing work by emerging artists from 80 international galleries, as well as hosting daily events and performances poolside. [Pulse](#) has taken over Nada's old spot, The Ice Palace, where it boasts 104 exhibitors from around the world and large-scale sculptures and installations, sited in the building and on the surrounding lawns. Not to be left out of the site jumping, [Scope](#) has occupied the former home of Pulse, the Soho Studios in Wynwood, and is exhibiting 70 international galleries that have been selected by fair organizers and a curatorial team.

[Art Miami](#), the longest running contemporary art fair in Miami, returns for its 20th-anniversary edition with 80 international galleries that are exhibiting modern and contemporary art, as well as decorative arts, crafts, and indigenous forms of art. Meanwhile, challenging the art-world establishment, two young fairs — [It Ain't Fair](#) and [Graffiti Gone Global](#) — offer an alternative point of view. It Ain't Fair, which is organized by O.H.W.O.W, presents a rambling, dynamic mix of work by some 30 hip artists from New York's downtown art scene and other cultural capitals, and Graffiti Gone Global, which is organized by SushiSamba and curated by James and Karla Murray, turns a 4,000-square foot venue over to 15 street artists and art collectives from nine different countries.

More street art can be found by chance in the [Wynwood Walls](#) outdoor-mural projects, organized by Deitch Projects and Goldman Properties; The Public Works, which features a new, propaganda-style mural by Shepard Fairey; and STAGES, an energetic exhibition of graffiti and fine artists that benefits the Lance Armstrong Foundation — making Miami, more than any other art-fair center, a unique place where high and low culture collide and new forms of art are born.