

ArtReview

Art Basel Miami 2015 – Latin American galleries

To coincide with the Latin American focus of ArtReview's December issue, Jean Wainwright selects some gallery highlights from this year's fair

By Jean Wainwright



The air is hot and humid, the traffic often draws to a standstill, there has been torrential rain... but nothing halts the flow of people coming to see the art – or indeed sample the insane party schedule – which this year even included a stabbing at the fair itself. At Art Basel Miami Beach, now in its 15th edition with 267 galleries from 32 countries across the globe, Noah Horovitz, the Fair's first Director of Americas for Art Basel, is already making his presence felt in the number and quality of the Latin American galleries, who have been enjoying excellent sales.

At OMR, a rare suite of unique aquatint etchings by James Turrell, *First Light Blonde* (1989-90), struck a poignant note when his trusted printer Peter Kneubuehler died, in 1999. Although conceived as a limited edition of 30, Turrell decided to leave it at just one. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's complex digital work *Atmosphere* (2015) at the same booth also drew crowds as people interacted with his screens which detected movement and body heat, altering the flow and configuration of a text by Charles Babbage.

Movement was also key at Nara Roesler, whose entire back wall was covered by a work of the Argentinian artist and precursor of pop and kinetic art, Julio Le Parc. His *Trame en Mouvement Virtuel* (1965–2015) agitated the eyes as they moved across it. In contrast, at Luisa Strina you could see the Brazilian artist Tonico Lemos Auad's sculptures, their combination of wood, crocheted vases and bronze rods a serene balance of form and contour.

Wood as a material was in evidence in many booths including *A Gentil Carioca*, where the Brazilian artist José Bento used his classic material of Brazilian wood to reconstruct Marcel Duchamp's chess board, chair and angle poise lamp, a dialogue on chance, modernism and conservation.

Ruth Benzacar took full advantage of the positioning of their booth to display a work by the Argentinian artist Adrián Villar Rojas, from the series *Fantasma* (2015). The glowing colours drew one towards the booth while his objects raised questions of transformation, ownership and authorship which seemed particularly relevant at an international art fair.

For those visitors interested in modern masters, Galeria Sur presented a small retrospective of eleven paintings by the Uruguayan-Catalan artist Joaquin Torres Garcia. These included his constructivist canvas *Graphisme en Noir et Rouge* (Paris 1931), painted soon after he founded the *Cercle et Carré* (Circle and Square) group of abstract artists in 1929, and *Constructivo Con Hombre Y Pez* (1944), which sang with vibrant red and yellow pigments. São Paulo gallery Millan showed Thiago Rocha Pitta's *Monumento à deriva continental* (Monument to the continental drift, 2011). This 2015 sculpture covered the back wall of the gallery, combining concrete with cloth, and playing with form and contour, fragility and strength, suggesting the flow of water. At Mendes Wood DM natural forms were literally evoked, with Solange Pessoa's sculpture *Untitled* (2008) contrasting the organic material of draped moss with a huge stone shaped bronze embedded within it.

The idea of material transformation continued at the Mexican gallery *kurimanzutto*, which had two large handwoven Gobelin sculptures by Gabriel Kuri, of receipts from the 99c store in Lincoln Avenue Miami Beach *Untitled* (99c only), 2015. The irony of the temporary and ephemeral as a sculptural art object were both a nod to Warhol's 99c canvases and to the commodification and value systems of the art market. Also playful, but alluding to the permanent in terms of tattoos and body art, was *kurimanzutto's* presentation in the *Kabinett* section of artworks by Dr Lakra. Referencing ethnography, the images from old magazines with hand drawn tattoos and markings allowed the viewer to play a historical guessing game with the provocative street and body art aesthetic.

At Galeria Fortes Vilaça a diptych by Brazilian artist Valeska Soares, *Darkness and Dawn* (from bindings) (2015), continued her dialogue of using text and image, the juxtaposition of the black and white glued book covers weaving a complex surreal literary journey; while Emilio Chapela's *List of countries by GDP 2010 (Nominal)* (2014) at Henrique Faria seemed to provide an ironic synergy between his sculpture and purchasers at the fair.

Having finally transversed Art Basel, you might wish to step into Luciana Brito Galeria's booth, kick off your shoes and, with bare feet, step into Maria Abamovic's quartz crystal *Shoes for Departure* (2015): "close your eyes and make your own serene exodus..."

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