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High Quality at Art Basel Miami Beach

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Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich exhibited at Art Basel Miami Beach 2008. © copyright 2008 by mch swiss exhibition (holding) ltd. - all rights reserved.

MIAMI, FL. - The seventh edition of Art Basel Miami Beach closed on Sunday, December 7, 2008. More than 250 galleries from 33 countries exhibited works by over 2,000 artists. With a program of special exhibitions, performances, panel discussions, visits to private collections, and crossover events featuring film, music, and architecture, the show attracted more than 40,000 visitors and 1,800 journalists from all over the globe. Many thousands of guests attended the surrounding cultural exhibitions and events, while renowned artists and leading artworld personalities participated in the programs of Art Basel Miami Beach.

The visitors included art collectors, museum professionals, and art enthusiasts who flew in from all over the USA and the rest of the world. A great many artists were also drawn to the event, among them Chuck Close, Ai Weiwei, James Rosenquist, Olafur Eliasson, Philip Taaffe, Jeff Koons, AA Bronson, Vik Muniz, and Francesco Vezzoli. Over 100 museum groups visited the show with delegations from their

boards of trustees, as did private collectors North and South America, Europe and the emerging markets of the artworld.

Despite the difficult broader economic situation, Art Basel Miami Beach proved that high-quality works remain in strong demand, as collectors rewarded excellent material and strong booth presentations with steady sales throughout the week. Many exhibitors reported satisfactory to excellent results given the current conditions, made valuable new contacts for the future of their program, and are already looking forward to the next Art Basel Miami Beach, which takes place December 3 through December 6, 2009.

Discussing their experience with the show's organizers, gallerists offered positive reports, including:

Raimund Thomas, Galerie Thomas (Munich): "We have been participating at Art Basel Miami Beach since its second edition and have established many personal contacts over the years. This proves its value now and we have an extremely positive response to our offerings."

The sectors at Art Basel Miami Beach 2008

More than 250 galleries participated in this year's Art Basel Miami Beach, of which 25 were new galleries chosen by the Selection Committee. Two new countries represented were Sfeir-Semler from Lebanon and The Third Line from United Arab Emirates.

The sector Art Galleries featured four galleries that exhibited the first time or returned after a brief hiatus: Air de Paris (Paris), Greenberg Van Doren Gallery (New York), and Eleni Koroneou Gallery (Athens). Many exciting projects were on view at Art Galleries such as huge stone sculptures by Michael Heizer (Peter Freeman Gallery, New York), a solo exhibition with new works especially made for this installation by Philip Taaffe (Jablonka Gallery, Cologne/Berlin), the first presentation since the 1980ies of central works by Robert Rauschenberg (Washburn Gallery, New York), from the collection of late actress Lily Tomlin, and a solo show of work by Jean Dubuffet (Helly Nahmad, New York).

This year's Art Kabinett was of extraordinary quality and showed an interesting mix of carefully curated exhibitions in the booths of the galleries. The 17 projects in this sector featured a wide array of artists, ranging from young artists such as William Cordova (Arndt & Partner, Berlin, Zurich) and Tomasz Kowalski (carlier gebauer, Berlin) to historical figures like Meret Oppenheim (Ursula Krinzinger, Vienna), Francis Picabia (Haas & Fuchs, Berlin), Robert Smithson and Marcel Duchamp. Group shows included exhibitions titled "Text and Image in 20th-Century Art" and "Kusama and Her Contemporaries."

The sectors Art Nova and Art Supernova presented surprising works by emerging artists, some fresh from the studio, and included a striking number of solo shows, featuring premier works by Kris Martin (Sies and Hoeke), Aida Ruilova (Salon 94), and Sturtevant (mezzanin) as well as artists from emerging markets of India (Nature Morte / Bose Pacia), the United Arab Emirates (The Third Line) and China (Vitamin Space).

With its 20 gallery exhibitions in converted shipping containers, Art Positions was a favorite among visitors. The ULTRA installation by Federico Diaz and the Czech design collective E-Area at the Art Positions site showcasing the Art Sound Lounge in collaboration with David Weinstein attracted a huge audience, especially at night. This year, Jens Hoffmann again curated the successful Art Perform program at Art Positions, which included special daily performances by Jordan Wolfson, Christian Jankowski, Yoshua Okon and Adriana Lara.

Located in the Botanical Garden, the Art Video Lounge, titled "Honey, I Rearranged the Image...!" and curated by Rike Frank, presented an extensive overview of the latest work in video art by some of today's most exciting international artists, and accompany the video program were special screenings and an exhibition, both very well received.

The Art Projects, seven art works in public spaces in Lummus Park on Ocean Drive, at the Oceanfront and on Island Gardens attracted many visitors, especially during the two Nights at Lummus Park evening events, featuring special performances by Jiri Kovanda and Dora Gracia. One major highlight of this year's Art Basel Miami Beach was "Bubble," the work by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, presenting 100 blue shimmering ceramic bubbles that were spread over an area of 600 square meters (more than 6,500 square feet) at Island Gardens on Watson Island.

Many leading art-world personalities attended or took an active part in the Art Basel Conversations and Art Salon. Participating artists, architects, critics, curators, filmmakers, and museum directors were pleased to appear before such an interested audience. The premiere was a discussion between the two artists Chuck Close and Vik Muniz. Other panelists this year included such renowned artists, collectors, curators, and critics as Richard Flood, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Thelma Golden, Glenn Ligon, Billy Al Bengston, and Paul Schimmel, to name only a few. The panels took place before a packed crowd every morning and the topics were: "The Future of the Museum: Africa, America and the World," "Public/Private: The Artist as Philanthropist" and "Artistic Production: Los Angeles, an Alternate Art World Model?"

Art Basel Miami Beach also staged three cultural crossover events: Wednesday's Art Loves Music concert on the beach offered over a thousand people an electrifying performance of French electro-pop artist Yelle; Art Loves Film, honoring art collectors Herbert and Dorothy Vogel, presented the documentary about their artworld experience, "Herb and Dorothy"; Art Loves Architecture's evening on Saturday featured architect David Adjaye, with artists Matthew Ritchie and Teresita Fernandez in a discussion about the blurring of art and architecture.

Museum Groups

Representatives of almost all the world's major museums attended Art Basel Miami Beach. More than hundred international museum and collectors groups came from Austria, Arabic Emirates, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Great Britain, India, Russia, Switzerland, and the USA. The delegations included boards of trustees from New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Jewish Museum, Whitney Museum and the New Museum of Contemporary Art; the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and the ICA Boston; the Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago; the Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, the Dallas Museum of Art; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington; the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art; the Centre Pompidou in Paris; de Appel, Amsterdam; the Royal Academy, London; the Serpentine Gallery, London, and many more.

Parallel exhibitions in the greater Miami area

Following long tradition, the Miami museums organized important exhibitions including Yinka Shonibare at the Miami Art Museum; Anri Sala at the Museum of Contemporary Art; "Possibility of an Island" (Mungo Thomson, Peter Coffin, and others) for MOCA at the Goldman Warehouse; "Russian Dreams..." at the Bass Museum of Art; and both "American Streamlined Designed: The World of Tomorrow" and "Democracy: An Installation by Francesco Vezzoli" at The Wolfsonian-FIU. Once again Miami's leading private collections – among them the Margulies Collection, the Rubell Family Collection, CIFO, the private collection of Ella Cisneros, the de la Cruz Collection, the Mora Collection, the Scholl Collection, the Shack Collection, Dacra/Aqua, and the Robins Collection – opened their homes and warehouses to guests of the international art show. The daily visits to artists' studios in the Greater Miami area were also very popular with visitors.