



Art Basel in Miami Beach 2021 // News

Handmade tales: collage, textile and assemblage pieces abound at Art Basel in Miami Beach

NFTs may be the newest thing but physical objects still hold a warm place in the art world's heart



vanessa german, *Footnote*: (2021), Kasmin, New York

Photo by Eric Thayer

The Philadelphia-based artist vanessa german is a storyteller. Every piece of this assemblage sculpture feels like it had a history of its own before it was gathered to form this intricately detailed bust. Found fabrics, vintage hand-blown glass beads, ceramics and Danbury porcelain bells come together to form this work, which, according to the wall text, also includes more poetic materials like "old love", "new love" and "a lost mind come to find its own self". german sees art as a way to promote social healing for Black communities in the US, and in her work tries to prioritise creativity and tenderness as a way to reckon with the tragedy of structural racism. This sculpture, priced at \$40,000, is one of three on view

Daniel Cassady

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With NFT installations flashing in hi-def from screens at Pace, and Tezos letting fair visitors mint an algorithm-assisted self-portrait, the art world seems prepared to stop flirting with the metaverse and take things to the next level. But that does not mean there is not room for a more deliberate kind of art. The aisles of Art Basel in Miami Beach are packed with rich, textural works. Folded paper, textiles, found objects and epoxy resin hang, drape and explode from the walls of gallery stands, proving that physical objects still hold a warm place in the heart of the art market.



Catalina Swinburn, *COCHA* (2021), Isabel Aninat, Santiago

Photo by Eric Thayer

Made entirely out of pages from discarded 1970s atlases that depict coastlines in Latin America, this large-scale woven piece, priced at \$40,000, drapes off the wall of Aninat's stand. The blue of the ocean on the strips of paper gives the work a liquid quality—enough so that it feels like you could be looking at a suspended waterfall. "We are having a bit of a shakeup in Latin America," says Swinburn, "so we have to go back, to reweave and try to understand our present by being aware of what's happened in our past."





Alvaro Barrington, *Legend in the City* (2021), Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, New York and Tokyo

Photo by Eric Thayer

Born in Grenada and raised in Brooklyn, Alvaro Barrington merges his entire personal history into a massive concrete frame in this assemblage piece, priced at \$90,000. Layers of dark yarn run jagged across a burlap sack that recalls his childhood years in the Caribbean. Spray-painted sections of cardboard and a milk crate basketball hoop call to mind the streets of Brooklyn, where he moved to at the age of 10 after his mother passed away, and the hip-hop culture from which he draws inspiration. "The thing about Alvaro is he's endlessly experimenting," says the gallerist Tim Blum. "There's no fear and there's no limit."



Rammellzee, *The Assassination of Gutenberg* (1988), Jeffrey Deitch, New York and Los Angeles

Photo by Eric Thayer

All the elements of Rammellzee's work populate the scene in this otherworldly assemblage, from electric deities wearing outlandish masks to the use of text as a weapon and a nod to graffiti culture. Layers of see-through epoxy resin create a sense of depth while grey-tinted bubbles erupt around the frame. On the opening day of Art Basel in Miami Beach, Jeffrey Deitch announced that the gallery now represents the artist's estate, and this work, which was immediately sold during the VIP preview, is just one work in a mini-retrospective of Rammellzee's career.





Frank Diaz Escalet, *Chain Gang*, Andrew Kreps, New York

Photo by Eric Thayer

Almost entirely self-taught, the artist Frank Diaz Escalet was a master at working with leather. His practice began with The House of Escalet, his New York City studio that made leather goods for Aretha Franklin and the Rolling Stones. After moving to Maine in 1974, he turned his focus to making works of art inspired by his upbringing in Puerto Rico. *Chain Gang* is impressively rich and detailed: a man with a shotgun to his back swings a sledgehammer while building a stretch of railroad with two other workers. The figure in the foreground is mostly out of frame, which give the viewer the feeling of looking over his shoulder, as if we, too, were part of the gang. The work is priced at \$30,000.



Kour Pour, *Fresh Off the Boat* (2021), Kavi Gupta, Chicago

Photo by Eric Thayer

This painting by the Iranian-British artist Kour Pour is nearly impossible not to mistake for a Persian carpet. Pour added 20 layers of gesso with a thick, bristled push broom, both from top to bottom and from side to side, to give a cross-hatched, woven feel. Next, he added a layer of screen and hand printing before sanding some of it off and painting over the piece by hand. Pour continues the tradition of Persian carpets using patterns found on centuries-old textiles as the starting point for this work, priced at \$200,000.

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