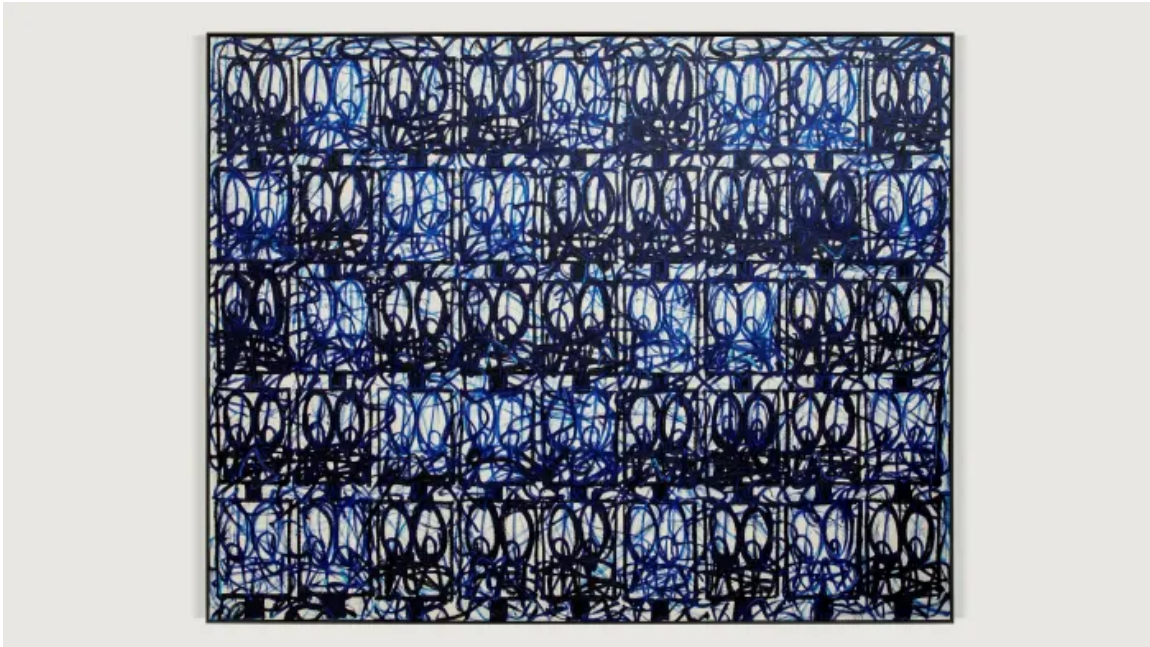


Buyers hustle at Art Basel Miami Beach as Covid-19 fears return

Satellite fair success; South South's digital sale; the Gagosian goes to China; Old Masters at auction in London



Rashid Johnson's 'Bruise Painting "Ask Me Now"' (2021) sold for \$975,000 © Stephanie Powell/Hauser & Wirth

Melanie Gerlis 2 HOURS AGO

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Visitors to this week's Art Basel Miami Beach arrived in the mood to buy, happy to snap up work at America's biggest art fair for the first time in two years. There was a sense too of "last hurrah" purchases as news of the emerging Omicron coronavirus variant stoked fears that the international market window could soon shut again.

Sales were swiftly sealed, many in the pipeline ahead of the fair's VIP opening on November 30 and confirmed on the day. Early sales reported to the Financial Times from just six major galleries (from a total 253), added up to \$40m.

New work proved particularly popular with buyers, including the Texas couples Howard and Cindy Rachofsky and John and Jennifer Eagle, who together bought a vast ceramic installation of autumnal leaves by Rebecca Manson from Josh Lilley gallery (\$350,000). Miami's ICA museum bought Christina Quarles's "Ascent" (2021) (\$325,000) and Rashid Johnson's three-metre wide "Bruise Painting 'Ask Me Now'" (2021) (\$975,000), both from Hauser & Wirth. Trustees from the same museum bought work by Dominic Chambers at Lehmann Maupin.



Umar Rashid's 'Tupac y Tupac, Time lords of the Andes. Or, a failed Fitzcarraldo' (2021) © Tiwani Contemporary





Umar Rashid, 'Incident at Lover's Cove' (2021) © Tiwani Contemporary

Galleries with work at the lower end of the price scale also reported healthy sales, particularly with more politically charged work. Tiwani Contemporary sold out of its booth of 10 works based on an imagined empire by the African American Umar Rashid (\$25,000-\$65,000).

The fair's aisles were not as crowded as in pre-pandemic times, due to a now-familiar timed entry system, with gallerists well-adjusted to the new normal. "Even if there are more lockdowns, systems are now in place to continue promoting and selling the works of our artists," said Adam Sheffer, senior director at Lisson Gallery.

Spirits were also high at Untitled, an established satellite fair to Art Basel, on the beach by Ocean Drive, with 145 exhibitors. "My clients love this fair. There is a degree of discovery, accessibility and spontaneity enabled by the availability and [lower] price points of the works," said the New York-based art adviser Rachel Cole.



Carolina Wheat at Elijah Wheat gallery's Untitled booth © Andrew Mitchell



Serge Attukwei Clottey with his work at Gallery 1957's Untitled space © Andrew Mitchell

Gallerists were enthusiastic too, including those in a new, subsidised section for more fledgling businesses. “We are so grateful for the ability to experiment at a fair. Not all gallerists are trust-fund kids,” said Carolina Wheat, co-founder of the non-profit Elijah Wheat, which had made early sales by the New York artist Azikiwe Mohammed (priced up to \$10,000).

Strong trade was also reported by [Ghana’s](#) Gallery 1957, which sold out its booth of Serge Attukwei Clottey (\$45,000-\$90,000) and by Norway’s Kristin Hjellegjerde, whose mixed booth included work by Sara Berman (up to \$26,800). Meanwhile, across the bay at Art Miami, a Banksy image of the *Peanuts* cartoon character Charlie Brown was reported to have sold for \$4m (Maddox Gallery).



William Kentridge's work outside El Espacio 23 museum © Pavel Acosta Proenza

Activity continues at [South South](#), a platform launched mid-pandemic to prioritise the historically sidelined Global South regions of Africa, Latin America and Asia. The future formula of the nascent enterprise is likely more “hybrid”, says Liza Essers, founder of Goodman Gallery and the driving force behind [South South](#). She is planning the platform’s second “Veza”, the Zulu word she has used for its online auction run on behalf of its 56 members. This time the Veza, to run in March 2022, will be dedicated to video and other digital art, “probably with a [non-fungible token](#) element,” Essers says. This week, the technology platform [Niio](#) announced a partnership with South South.

Physical shows are in the pipeline for 2022, she says, while this week in Miami marks the news of its inaugural residency — running in person and virtually — and sponsored by the city’s collector and philanthropist Jorge Pérez, through his [El Espacio 23](#) museum. A work by South Africa’s superstar artist William Kentridge stands outside the museum this week, as an extension of Goodman Gallery’s pop-up show in the Design District, though the artist was unable to travel stateside due to the latest Covid-19 restrictions.



Christina You is now the Gagosian's representative in China

The mega-gallery Gagosian is ramping up its presence in China with the appointment of Christina You as its representative in the country. She was previously director of development and creative strategy at the influential UCCA Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing.

Her appointment coincides with an “unbelievable surge in demand [for art] in the region”, says Nick Simunovic, who has run the gallery’s activities in Asia since 2007. He says he has never seen such an appetite — or sales figures — for western contemporary art. The pace of technology and thirst for knowledge means that his audience are now extremely well informed, he says. “I’ve had collectors here tell me about shows that are happening on [New York’s] Lower East Side.”

Gagosian opened a gallery in Hong Kong’s Pedder Building in 2011 but “is not looking for real estate elsewhere [in Asia]”, Simunovic says. “It’s easy to open a gallery but to programme it constantly is a big endeavour.” Gagosian’s Hong Kong space has already sold out its solo show by Jonas Wood, which opened last week, he says.



Albrecht Dürer, 'Virgin and Child' (1503) © Agnews

London shows and sells some juicy Old Masters works next week, spanning Roman sculpture to 19th-century paintings. Generating the most excitement is a rediscovered pen and ink drawing by [Albrecht Dürer](#), “Virgin and Child” (1503), on view at Agnews gallery and part of [London Art Week](#) (December 3-10). In 2016, the work was bought as a presumed copy from a house sale in Boston for just \$30. Since its discovery by the gallery and subsequent endorsements, it is now said to be worth \$50m.

At Sotheby's, a 1st to 2nd century AD Roman statue of [Aphrodite](#), which stood in the palace of Scotland's Dukes of Hamilton between 1776 and 1919, is offered for between £2m and £3m. Aphrodite's other illustrious owners include the publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst. Highlights at Christie's include a full-scale oil sketch of Salisbury Cathedral by [John Constable](#), who has a coinciding show at London's [Royal Academy](#). The painting was made in 1823 for the British artist's major patron, the Bishop of Salisbury, and is estimated at between £2m and £3m.

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