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DIARY

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Miami Vices

During the art world's annual mass hegira to Miami, one's experience is defined as much by the events he misses as the ones he attends. Among the casualties of my itinerary were parties (for Nylon magazine, for Art Basel codirector Cay Sophie Rabinowitz, and, at the Versace mansion, for Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller), a trip (to the new private luxury island Dellis Cay, in the Turks and Caicos), and dinners—one hosted by Greene Naftali at The Standard, another by Elizabeth Dee in a Miami Beach apartment, yet another by Max Farago, Dicksmith Gallery, and Rivington Arms at Farago's parents' "Chinese Village"-style apartment, the invite to which promised: A TWENTY-FIVE MINUTE DRIVE—AND SO WORTH IT!! Be that as it may, twenty-five minutes can seem a lifetime in Miami.

I did, however, make it to the Raleigh on Wednesday night for Deitch Projects's annual concert, this year showcasing ubiquitous twee-pop team CocoRosie and the ladies of The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black. The serene outdoor patio always feels incongruous to whatever bizarre scene Deitch cooks up, but somehow it always works. While Karen Black's shenanigans made several jaws drop, those familiar with their antics felt a warm nostalgia in seeing frontwoman Kembra Pfahler eaten yet again by a cardboard vagina dentata.

The next morning brought a breakfast celebrating the Rubell collection's new group show, "Euro-Centric Part 1: New European Art," and solo exhibitions by John Stezaker and Hernan Bas. I missed the breakfast but saw its unsettling aftermath: tables overflowing with prepeeled hard-boiled eggs and bacon surrounded by surgical gloves. (No health-code violations here.) The crowd wondered whether the spread was an installation or a utilitarian take on buffet by the author of Real Life Entertaining, Jennifer Rubell. Upstairs, Bas's exhibition of paintings and video installations was pleasant but a bit uneven. At the entrance, two middle-aged collectors discussed the young Miamian's work. "He's gay," said one. "How do you know? It doesn't say so in the wall text," the other exclaimed, looking uncomfortable. "Yes it does, look. It says he's inspired by Wilde."

But art wasn't the only thing on the agenda, as flocks of well-to-dos made their way to the Design Miami vernissage. At times it was difficult to differentiate the art and design fairs—Dutch design team Studio Job's show at Moss, for instance, would have looked right at

home at Art Basel—which may be why some rushed to defend their territories. “In design, the goal is to sell thousands of copies; in art, only one. I don’t believe in just one,” said studio cofounder Job Smeets. Or, more superficially, as one friend remarked about the crowds: “At Basel, it’s face lifts; at Design Miami, it’s nose jobs.” At the reception for Light Sock, Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s sparkly installation at the Swarovski Crystal Palace in the Moore Building, architects Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio were already feeling the brunt of the fair. “After this? I just want to find a place to collapse,” said Scofidio.

As tempting as that sounded, our night was far from over. Driving up the winding driveway to the verdant estate of the Vizcaya Museum & Gardens for The Ball of Artists, I felt my stomach tighten as I recalled Tom Cruise’s journey to the ominous mansion in *Eyes Wide Shut*. But on reaching the building, I found the mood decidedly festive. “We’re back in Venice!” yelled one man wandering the grand, Italian-style villa facing the bay. Contemporary artworks were scattered like Easter eggs throughout the grounds. While many of the pieces were buried deep in the labyrinthine gardens, Cristina Lei Rodriguez’s *Struggling for Grandeur*, a large fake topiary, was front and center. “Wouldn’t that piece look amazing in my gallery? Too bad it’s here through February,” noted Jose Freire of New York gallery Team, where Rodriguez will be having a show in January.

Another stunning sight was artist Donald Urquhart leaning against a large stone stairwell working a thrift-store Little Edie look. “This is the first time I’ve done drag and not felt overdressed,” he exclaimed. The night climaxed with a musical performance by the gamine Emily Sundblad, followed by Robert Chambers’s “intervention,” in which he unleashed 160 miles of compressed Mylar streamers from the roof of the main house. “I wanted enough to reach Sweden, but I ran out of money. This would at least make it to Bimini.”

“I can’t believe we’re trying so hard to get into a strip club,” a well-heeled gallery girl scoffed outside our next destination. If the Vizcaya Museum was a little slice of heaven, the Goldrush Gentleman’s Club, where Javier Peres launched the latest issue of *Black Daddy*, his glittery, glossy fag rag, was a licentious visit to a carnal underworld. The place was invaded by a cutthroat mob scene of art-world power players, socialites, and other impresarios, all of whom will remain nameless to protect the not-so-innocent. “These homosexuals have never seen so much pussy in their lives,” said one artist. Wouldn’t a club with male strippers be more apropos? I asked Peres, whom I found upstairs in the VIP area. “But that would be so predictable,” he replied. “This is a bit too much irony for me,” said a friend. But I disagreed—this was one event where ironic distance would have been a blessing.



Left: Architect Ken Smith with LA MoCA curator Paul Schimmel. Right: Artist Jeremy Kost.

The next morning, after sloughing off the sleaze, and after a quick stop at the home of Debra and Dennis Scholl, I checked out the first edition of Geisai Miami. Organized by Takashi Murakami, the young fair for unrepresented artists is hosted by Pulse, upstairs from the main fair itself. Each artist attends to his own booth, fielding deals on his own terms. "The structure appeals to me. It's nice to have direct communication with the artist," noted Los Angeles MoCA chief curator Paul Schimmel, touring the booths with architect Ken Smith. Despite their "emergent" status, there were some familiar faces in the house, including Eric Doeringer, perhaps better known as the guy who hawks bootleg versions of contemporary artworks on Chelsea sidewalks. His work, which includes miniature Elizabeth Peyton's and Paul McCarthys, benefits from the new environment. "Most artists have a sense of humor," he noted, "though John Currin and Sean Landers have both written cease-and-desist letters. Takashi Murakami actually sent me one, too, though he lets me exhibit so long as I don't sell."

Pulse itself—this year in new, less flimsy digs—looked better than in years past. Postmasters had a compelling installation of a sinking Titanic by Jennifer and Kevin McCoy, as well as an impressively towering sculpture, Beautiful Superman, by David Herbert, while in the Impulse section, a solo exhibition of paeans to American pop culture by French artist Olivier Millagou at London's Bischoff/Weiss gallery looked particularly dashing.

Thursday is always the best night for parties, and by Friday evening, most everyone seemed arted out. At his fete hosted by Le Baron, Grand Life, and Conner Contemporary at RokBar, self-proclaimed "anti-paparazzo" Jeremy Kost admitted to oversaturation: "This weekend, no more art. I need a break." At the Delano's elegant South Florida room, the soigné crowd was mostly music and fashion, with Pharrell Williams, Jacques Herzog, Peter Saville, and Stefano Tonchi making the rounds, though several art folks were in attendance as well, including Anthony Goicolea and Jack Pierson, who was happily ensconced at a

table with QED Gallery's David Quadrini. Whitney Biennial cocurator Shamim Momin and dealer Andrea Rosen both poked their heads in but called it quits early. We stuck around for a while, hoping to catch Linda Evangelista's highly anticipated DJ set. Finally we asked a friend-in-the-know about Evangelista's ETA, and he informed us she wasn't coming. Her excuse? "She couldn't find a babysitter."

—David Velasco



Left: Dealer Leigh Connor. Right: Dealer Ed Winkleman.