

Art Basel Miami 2003

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Art Basel/Miami Beach, now in its second year, has become a critical venue for the viewing and sale of twentieth- and twenty-first-century art. Expectations were high after last year's successful inauguration, and fair organizers were under pressure to prove the staying power of this new event. What became immediately apparent was that the quality of the artwork was maintained and even surpassed that of the preceding year. Although the level of excitement from 2002's giddy introduction could not be matched, the sense that AB/MB will become an annual pilgrimage has begun to take hold.

Success for the fair can be attributed to a number of Miami-based elements including geographic desirability; the participation of local curators, museum boards and dealers; and, most important, the crucial role of Miami's own art collectors. The city is home to some of the leading private art collections in the United States, and the participation of those collectors, who open their doors and generously entertain guests, adds a personal element to the more commercial nature of the fair. Collections such as the Rubells, Margulies, and Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz among numerous others were on display and offered the viewing public insight into the private and idiosyncratic world of art collecting.

The fair itself was host to 175 galleries that drew a crowd of nearly 30,000 visitors over a five-day period. Fair organizer Samuel Keller put together an extensive program of receptions, panel discussions, and related events and established a new "yellow-dot" campaign to indicate artworks priced under \$5,000—presumably a reaction to the success of the Affordable Art Fair which has demonstrated the enormous market for reasonably priced art.

The "Art Statements" section of the fair was particularly strong, and devoted sixteen one-person shows to emerging talents such as Yoshua Okón (Galería Francesca Kaufmann), Gabriel Kuri (Sara Meltzer Gallery), Pedro Reyes (Galería Enrique Guerrero), Carlos Garaicoa (Lombard Freid Gallery), Santiago Cucullu (Barbara Davis Gallery), and Laura Vinci (Galeria Nara Roesler). These juried spaces were primarily reserved for multimedia installations, a good number of which focused on social themes.

Okón's performance, *Coyotería*, 2003, which later turned into a video after the first day of the fair, is a clever take on Joseph Beuys' piece, *I like America and America likes me*. In Beuys's 1974 art-action the canine functioned as a symbol of intuition, spirituality, and transformation in the face of Western materialism and positivist thinking. Okón's piece skillfully uses the idea of the "coyote"—a term linked to exploitation and greed within Mexico, both in reference to colonial texts that refer to Europeans as coyotes, as well as to the more contemporary meaning that identifies the coyote with the middleman who smuggles humans across the Mexican-U.S. border—to produce an alternative reading linked to corrupt economic and political values. Okón's performance underscores the failure of Beuys's project for social transformation, while calling attention to the widespread absence of a spiritually or socially-responsive element in our money-driven culture.

Yoshua Okón. *Coyotería*, 2003. Performance video: rear-projection of 9 3/4 x 13 ft (3 x 4 m.) onto screen, and relics from performance. Galleria Francesca Kaufmann.

Carlos Garaicoa. *Letter to the Censors*, 2003. Mixed media installation with ten black and white photographs in light boxes with hand-bound artist's book. Sculpture: 82 1/2 x 43 3/4 x 27 1/2 in. (210 x 111 x 70 cm.). Photographs: 4 x 5 in. (10 x 12,7 cm.). Lombard-Freid Fine Arts.

Priscilla Monge. From the series "Enumeración de la sangre", 2003. Photograph. Galería Juana de Aizpuru.

