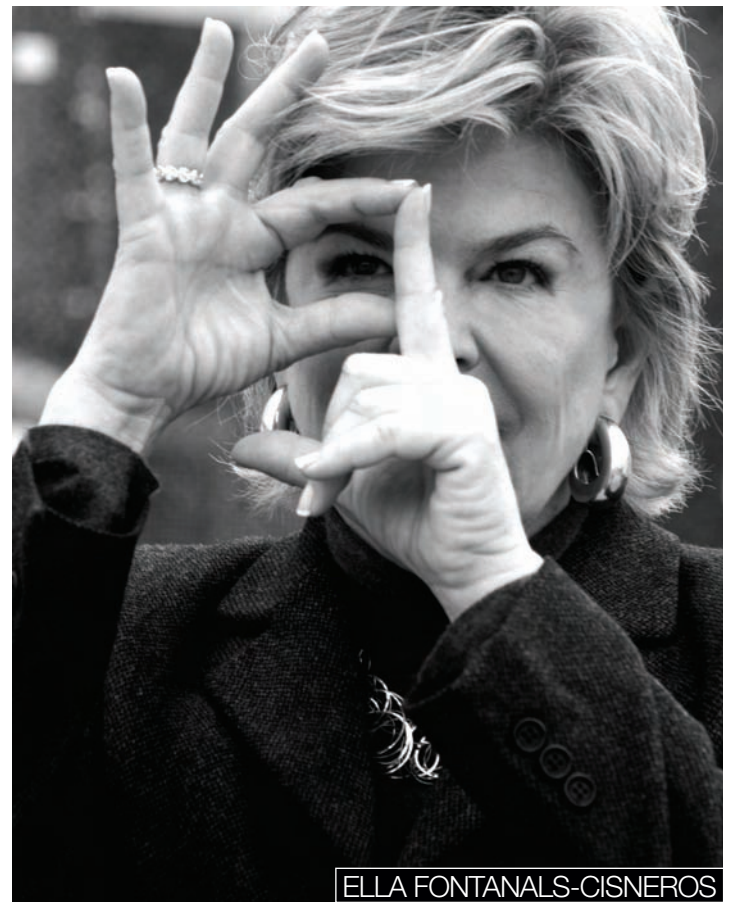


COLLECTORS ROUNDTABLE

WHEN ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH OPENED ITS DOORS IN 2002, IT WAS HARD TO ENVISION WHAT THE MASH-UP BETWEEN A TROPICAL METROPOLIS AND A HEAVYWEIGHT INTERNATIONAL ART FAIR WOULD PRODUCE. SINCE THEN, THE SHOW HAS BROUGHT MANY CHANGES TO MIAMI AND THE LARGER ART WORLD. WE INVITED SOME OF THE CITY'S PREEMINENT COLLECTORS—**ELLA FONTANALS-CISNEROS, NORMAN BRAMAN, JAVIER MORA AND DENNIS SCHOLL**—TO WEIGH IN. BY CAROL KINO



ELLA FONTANALS-CISNEROS

Art Basel Miami Beach is now in its ninth year. What effect has it had upon the art world?

DENNIS SCHOLL: It has changed the way collectors look for art, look at art and collect art. The ability to see many things all in one place in a short amount of time is a big help.

JAVIER MORA: Because Miami is a young city, it brought a younger crowd into the mix. It turned the art fair into an art party.

ELLA FONTANALS-CISNEROS: For collectors, it has been very refreshing: It has offered us the opportunity to come to a city with wonderful weather, full of nice hotels!

NORMAN BRAMAN: We now have an art fair in the United States that competes very well with Art Basel in Switzerland. In fact, I believe that the baby is about ready to surpass the parent. Not only do we have the main fair, but we have all these auxiliary fairs. And no other community of collectors has ever opened its homes the way the people of Miami have.

What are you most excited to see this year?

EFC: There will be a lot of new strong galleries coming from different parts of the world, and I'm looking forward to seeing what they bring.

DS: I'm curious to see what our local private collections with public spaces will do. The Rubell, de la Cruz and Margulies collections are what bring the Basel VIPs back year after year.

NB: The exciting thing about Art Basel Miami Beach is that it is full of wonderful surprises. Because galleries hold back work for the fair, we always see something we did not expect to see.

Which country or city—other than Miami—is producing the most interesting artists at the moment?

NB: New York. It's still the mecca, still the Taj Mahal.

EFC: Latin America. It has always been a productive place for artists, but earlier it was seen as a regional thing. People would think, "Oh, Latin America—full of color and rhumba dumba!" But now collectors even within the region are buying more international works, and exhibitions



NORMAN BRAMAN



DENNIS SCHOLL

JAVIER MORA





LEFT: Ed Ruscha, *Nine Swimming Pools*, 1968–1997;
BELOW: Pierre Malphettes, *Un Arbre Blanc*

quite a bit to make our wine, Betts & Scholl. We've gotten interested in contemporary aboriginal art and have collected a few works, most recently a painting by Jimmy Donegan. It's fascinating to hang an aboriginal painting next to a Mark Bradford or a Francesca DiMatteo and see how they interact.

EFC: A few months ago I acquired *No ginger k*, a 2006 multimedia work by the Viennese artist Hubert Scheibl. It's an abstract painting on paper, but it also uses collage, so there is a lot of detail in it. I'm really crazy about it. My Latin-American collection focuses on geometric abstraction, but I like abstraction in general.

NB: A Picasso sculpture and a Dan Flavin piece, both purchased at the fair last year.

How has the show changed Miami?

JM: It gave Miami the shot in the arm it needed—it brought international culture into the mix.

EFC: The fair has brought a lot of people here who see Miami as more than a vacation destination. It has also moved the people of Miami to think of art as part of their culture and something that has to be developed for the city to grow.

DS: The amazing Miami art scene was up and running by the time Art Basel Miami Beach came to town, but the fair's bright light has allowed tens of thousands to discover it in person. Our artists have had international shows because of relationships created via the fair. The collecting community is now recognized for the adventurous, cutting-edge group it is.

And the larger Miami community has joined the party, with a cultural renaissance that has enveloped our city.

NB: It has created a whole new group of galleries and collectors, and it has transformed the city's image. And if you look at the dollars that are spent here, it's like having a Super Bowl here every year. **ABMB**

and biennials around the world are full of Latin-American artists.

JM: For me, it's Havana. As Cuba returns to the world economy, it's going through a huge social evolution, and that must produce interesting artwork. The under-35-year-old crowd has a very different view of the world, and an underground art scene is developing for music, plastic arts and even street art, like graffiti. And the architecture just blows your mind.

DS: I've recently been spending a lot of time in Detroit in my new role as vice president of arts for the Knight Foundation, and I have found an incredibly vibrant visual-art scene there. It's driven by an upstart institution, the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, and it feels a lot like a small American Berlin, with plentiful studio space for very little cost, strong legacy cultural assets like the Detroit Institute of Arts, and a real can-do attitude among young artists.

What's been your favorite art purchase in the last year?

JM: A 2009 sculpture by Pierre Malphettes called *Un Arbre Blanc*. It's made from recycled wood that he rebuilt into a tree. The leaves are neon, and the cables that go to the neon are like the life force that goes to the leaves. The piece is beautiful lit or unlit, and it's just amazing to see it in the context of our home, which is completely surrounded by oak trees.

DS: Recently Debra and I have been going to Australia

“THE EXCITING THING ABOUT ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH IS THAT IT IS FULL OF WONDERFUL SURPRISES... WE ALWAYS SEE SOMETHING WE DID NOT EXPECT TO SEE.”
— NORMAN BRAMAN

