



One of the most important Art Fairs in the world as seen through the eyes of two of the leaders in Italian nautical design: our own impassioned special envoys  
by Mauro Micheli and Sergio Beretta



*Art Basel, the famous Swiss contemporary art exhibition, has been holding a winter edition in Miami Beach every year in December since 2002. Sergio Beretta and Mauro Micheli, owners of Officina Italian Design and passionate art collectors themselves, were present at the latest American edition. From a perspective characterized by remarkable curiosity and fascination, they labeled themselves "accidental reporters" and recounted the experience to us here at Barche Magazine.*

# ART on the SEA

Pictured on this page, a piece by Gabriel Kuri (Courtesy of Franco Noero, Turin). Simply expressed, the piece is made of everyday objects and recycled materials, chosen not only for their physical properties but also for their special significance. Kuri's recurring theme is the passage of time and how it leaves indelible traces upon objects in its wake. His works are monuments to its inexorable passage: each element is linked to the next, with no distinction between art and life. Objects and fragments, standing out, highlighted by their position in unusual contexts, seem to take on new meanings. Gabriel Kuri was born in 1970 in Mexico City.



*Untitled 1971* (Courtesy of Christian Stein, Milan) is a work by Pier Paolo Calzolari, born in Bologna in 1943. In moving between the planes of art installations and real-time actions, the artist shows his direct intent to "contaminate" art with real-life rhythms and materials, as an extension of the Arte Povera movement. He adopts elements coming from the natural and the technological worlds to create autobiographical pieces that mull over what an artist's role is or should be.

### What is art?

Reporters ask questions. We had only one to ask the gallery owners we liked. A simple question, but one that made them pretty nervous, with a specific request that the answer not be pat and professional, but direct, brief and instinctual: what is art? Galleria Francesca Minini: "Art is a dizziness that draws us in, an emotion that makes us glad to lose our balance, surprising us by opening our minds to a longing for new perceptions. To observe a tiny detail and think about infinity, about the quest for beauty and the renewing power of creativity." Many others did not even answer. Maybe our question truly embarrassed them. We would like to give our own definition. Art, in our opinion, is the representation and interpretation of the contemporary world. This response is tough because history can only really be understood when we are looking back on it. Artists often envision these things in advance, looking at modern times as if through the glass of history.

It was really fun to be able to wander around through the exhibitors' booths at the fair, choosing to examine whatever instinctively intrigued us, totally free of any constraints, and then write about it, without the limitations that restrict professional art critics. Some may appreciate our reflections, while others may be horrified ... but, in any case, just like every year in early December, there we were in Miami. Not for a boat show, but for one of contemporary art: Art Basel Miami Beach. And as anyone who knows us well knows, we prefer art shows to boat shows!

Art Basel is always pleasant and interesting. Miami, already the center of the universe, this year even took on some of the glow of Milan: several Italian celebrities showed up there, preferring to appear at America's foremost contemporary art exhibition rather than frequent the gala premiere at La Scala.

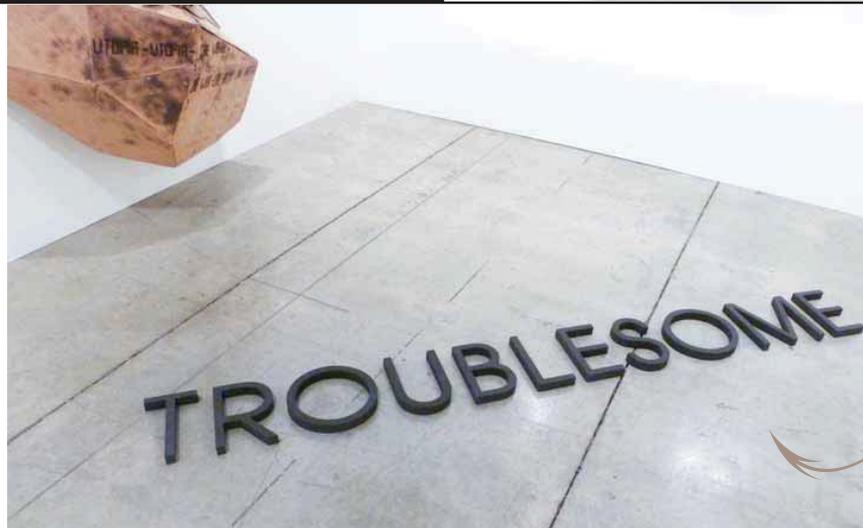
Everything there is perfect for a few days' break from the hecticness of the modern world: plenty of art, a beautiful ocean, the easy-going positivity of the American lifestyle, abundant sunshine and excellent steakhouses. It is an arts festival, compressed into a very few days, supported by a myriad of cultural events, maybe even too many.

We focused our visit on the Convention Center, the heart of the event, familiar to nautical professionals as home to the boat show in February. We strolled through the various stands of some of the most important galleries in the world: from Perrotin to Gagosian, from White Cube to Sean Kelly. Here is a small selection of some of the works that we liked best. Our only criterion was our personal taste. Ours is a virtual collection in which, in contrast to the real world, money was no object.



A work by Gina Pane (Courtesy of Kamel Mennour, Parigi). Born in Biarritz in 1939, Gina Pane lived most of her life in France, up until her death in Paris in 1990. With an Italian father and Austrian mother, she spent much of her childhood in Italy. She studied at the Parisian *Académie des Beaux-Arts* between 1961 and 1966. Gina Pane derived

a keen interest in the human body at the academy, in its physicality and the constraints that suffering imposes on it. She taught at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Mans from 1975 till 1990 and held workshops related to performances at the Georges Pompidou Center in 1978 and 1979.



A piece by Robert Barry (Courtesy of Alfonso Artiaco, Napoli). Born in New York in 1936, Barry is one of the artists who laid the groundwork for new visual idioms which would later be defined as "Conceptual Art." It was really more of an attitude than a movement, one which

has greatly influenced artistic development over the last three decades. The artist does not speak about his work but of what his art proposes, emphasizing the mental processes that led to its creation, thus reducing the actual physical space the work takes up to a minimum.



### Art and yachting

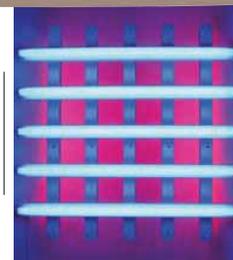
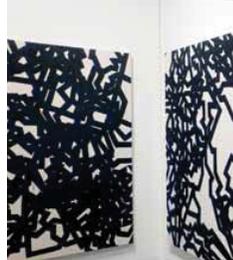
Both of these worlds can be seen in similar lights. Boats often, perhaps now more than ever, are viewed steeped in negative connotations seen as status symbols for flaunting wealth, power and social position. Art, too, can be perceived negatively as ostentation. Some collectors indeed surround themselves with artworks, even magnificent ones, just to show off their oftimes non-existent culture.

However, the true essence of yachting lies in owning a boat, living the sea-faring life, sharing this space of serenity and pleasure with friends and observing the land from a different perspective. Collecting art, too, can be a way to cultivate pleasure in our lives. Most people will never own a boat because the everyman's "affordable" boat, which some boating magazines insist on looking for, just does not exist. Art, on the other hand, passionately sought with knowledge and curiosity, can be enjoyed by anyone for very little money, in museums and private galleries. Art appreciation, the search for beauty and the refinement of taste are slow, on-going processes.

A piece by Becky Beasley (Courtesy of Galleria Francesca Minini, Milano). Born in 1975 in Portsmouth, Becky Beasley lives in St. Leonard-on-Sea in the U.K. An emerging artist, she has already received major recognition. Her personal exhibition, *The Outside* just closed last September at the Tate Britain (Art Now) in London, subsequent to its run in Milan at the Galleria Francesca Minini (November 2011 - January 2012). The works are the result of study and research inspired by her visit to the private apartments in Turin of Italian architect and designer Carlo Mollino.



«I really wanted to be an artist. I studied at the Brera Academy and fell into this work by chance. Little by little I realized that my "art studies" were essential in my profession, as I always focused on a balance of form and style». Mauro Micheli, in a 2007 interview with *Barche*.



### Art Basel Miami Beach

Recently defined in the pages of *Vogue* as a «Latin American festival, so colorful as to almost be kitsch; abundant in works of contemporary art which is truly what it is meant to be about, although not always for the right reasons», the Miami show is one of the most important art events in the world. The exhibition spaces are varied, starting from the Convention Center, where 31 countries from five continents are represented, with all kinds of works, including some using new technologies. The latest edition featured Karin Sander sculptures of little men made by 3D printer and works by the young Swedish artist Omid Delafrouz featuring pencil drawings transformed into computer-colored diptychs. The fair is divided into two main sections in addition to Video Art, Public Art, Film Art and the Art Basel Conversation Salon. There is also a section called Art Nova, for projects from younger galleries.



At the center of the page, a work by Latifa Echakhch (Courtesy of Kamel Mennour, Paris). Born in 1974 in Morocco, Echakhch moved to France while still a child. She embodies the contrasts between Arab and Western cultures, epitomizing the contradictions that characterize the Moroccan people, balancing a juxtaposition of North African customs and French culture. Clearly influenced by iconic Islamic decorative designs, the artist has developed her *Dérivés*. Here, the classic, Islamic pattern, the *girih*, composed of intricate geometric designs, abandon all rational logic and surrender to the canvas, randomly, drifting, bringing situational practices to the pictorial surface, interweaving once again elements of French avant-garde art with vestiges of the Arab collective memory.



Art and business

This has always been a fixation of ours. The link between art and business has long been evident in the world of luxury fashion. Just think of Yayoi Kusama's Louis Vuitton shop windows around the world or institutions like Prada or Trussardi who have been investing in art for advertising for years. The paths of art and shipyards used to cross occasionally, but only rarely, sporadically. Christian Jankowski's intervention at the Frieze fair of

2011 (an interesting art exhibition in London) made a higher-priced model of Aquariva the star of an impressive campaign of media exposure. The craft was not up for sale as a boat per se, but rather as work-of-art-boat to be sold on the art market, through the typical transaction process, regulated by the laws of supply and demand, therefore naturally subject to speculation, where the prices often reflect the whims of influential people. As we read a while ago at the MoMA in New York, "In art, one side moves the cards...the other comes from Mars." Real art is deaf to the cries of the fishwives of the market. We ourselves created an initiative that brought two of the greatest Italian photographers into the world of boating, with the book Mario Cresci and Gabriele Basilico: images from Riva Shipyards. This book is the result of a meeting between the late Gabriele Basilico\*, whose famous perspectives brought order and balance to what seemed like chaos, and Mario Cresci, who, instead, brought color back into details, with shapes and particulars that, since they are often taken out of context, take on a new life and identity.



\* Gabriele Basilico, who recently passed away at the age of 69, is considered one of the most important international photographers of the last 40 years.

The work of Rirkrit Tiravanija, an artist of Thai origin born in Buenos Aires in 1961, has been linked for decades to the idea of art based on relationships, exchange, communication and the dynamics of participation. Famous for his performances which include serving food, Tiravanija triggers dynamics which force the viewer to play an active role in the web of relationships that the artist intends to weave through his actions. His work is not only about kitchens, but more generally "the home," if by that we mean the space where relationships are woven, communication takes place, materials and emotions are exchanged. Living rooms to relax in, "Speakers Corners" for a chat, refreshment centers serving Turkish coffee... Tiravanija's work is full of places and spaces, domestic and private but also public and open for interacting with one another.



The "reporters"

Mauro Micheli (left in photo), from Adrara San Martino, Bergamo, studied at Bergamo High School of the Arts and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Milan and has been working with Riva since 1984, after winning a bid at the age of 25 for a position as assistant designer in the technical department of the shipyard. His designs are characterized by rigorous and clean classic lines. Of the relationship between the design of yachts and art, he says, "Our goal is to create a synthesis. The higher the form of contemporary art, the more total the synthesis, because contemporary art seeks the essential. If on the one hand, artistic inspiration demands a rupture from schematic thinking, on the other hand, it represents a continuity which leads to a cleanliness of forms. I do not see art as being in opposition to design." Sergio Beretta graduated from Brescia University with a degree in Economics. A great contemporary art lover, he began his professional career in aeronautics, as an air-traffic controller for several European airports while still cultivating his passion for art and design. Together, in 1993, they founded Officina Italian Design. Their studio has traditionally been linked to Riva (all Riva yachts are designed exclusively by Officina), with whom they have been working for over twenty years.

