

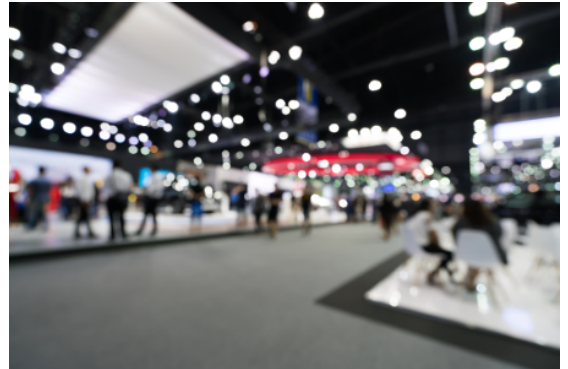
BLOG

6 Ways to Prep for Art Basel Miami

By Mary Pontillo

Dec 4, 2018

Art Basel Miami is one of the most popular art fairs of the year, drawing around 70,000 serious, aspiring and wannabe art collectors, fashionistas, celebrities and everyone in between. Over 250 of the world's leading galleries rent exhibition space for the event. Some display high-end blue-chip art in expertly designed booths at the Miami Convention Center with private security detail on site. Some are emerging galleries featuring experimental art in pop-up tents at the satellite fairs on the beach.



The fair, which runs December 6 - 9, is a time to see and be seen, to mingle with the world's most in-demand artists, and to make some high-figure art sales. It's also a time when a misdirected pop of a champagne bottle can put a hole in a priceless canvas; or an overzealous art aficionado can inadvertently back into a sculpture, knock it to the ground, and watch through Fendi spectacles as it shatters in pieces.

If you're a gallery owner, you know the value of exhibiting at Miami's premier art fair. The question is: **are you ready?**

We work with a lot of galleries and artists to prepare for the unique complexities of the event, including transport, set-up and heavy traffic. Here are some tips we've learned over the years:

Slow down. Most claims we see during Art Basel stem from handling and transit. Gallery owners are under tight time constraints to set up their booths amidst the commotion and things that are out of their control. Remember that handling art is an art itself and needs to be done meticulously.

Design your booth with purpose. Thoughtful booth design can mitigate losses and accidental damage. We've seen galleries that have done a great job of building beautiful and functional displays. For example, one incorporated risers around the perimeter of the booth to create a physical barrier in front of the art, and another pedestal in the middle section to create a wide swath of protection around a sculpture - without sacrificing aesthetics.

Curate wisely. Some vendors try to squeeze as much as they can into a booth by adding sub-walls, but spatial awareness goes a long way. When curating a collection for your exhibition area, be aware of how much physical space a person takes up. People are used to seeing art in galleries and museums which have ample floor space for viewing. It's not uncommon for viewers to back into art while looking at the piece in front of them.

Plan ahead for shipping. As we talked about in a [recent blog](#), most damage happens in transit. With so many galleries descending on Miami at the same time, you don't want to wait until the last minute to hire a shipper. There's a limited number of qualified art shippers who will deliver to Art Basel Miami and they book up fast. Get your ducks in a row months beforehand to make sure you have reliable movers.

Have a team in place. Because of the international flavor of Art Basel, collectors and exhibitors from around the world buy and sell during the four-day period. Make sure you work with a customs broker who specializes in moving art internationally.

Assess your risk management ahead of time. In the months leading up to the show, dealers will be busy securing consignments to procure pieces. Their fine art insurance brokers will be working to secure certificates of insurance, field special requests from consigners on insuring transit, and checking that transit limits and limits of liability while at the fair are adequate. They'll assess whether changes to your policy need to be made for the "to/from/while at" the fair, or if existing policy limits adequately cover fair liability.

There are only a handful of insurers in the world who underwrite fine art and they need to know exactly how much they're on the hook for during the fair. Why? Because if disaster strikes, and each gallery has tens to hundreds of millions of dollars in art on site, the insurer needs to make sure they've spread the risk through re-insurance to cover all the losses. As such, it is imperative that brokers be proactive and report the total value of the artwork their clients are bringing to Miami to the insurance companies.

Art Basel Miami is one of the highlights of the year. It's inspiring, glamorous and just plain fun. But don't take unnecessary risks - work with an experienced fine art insurance broker to support you through the planning process.

Mary Pontillo is the National Fine Arts Practice Leader and Senior Vice President for [Risk Strategies DeWitt Stern Division](#).

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