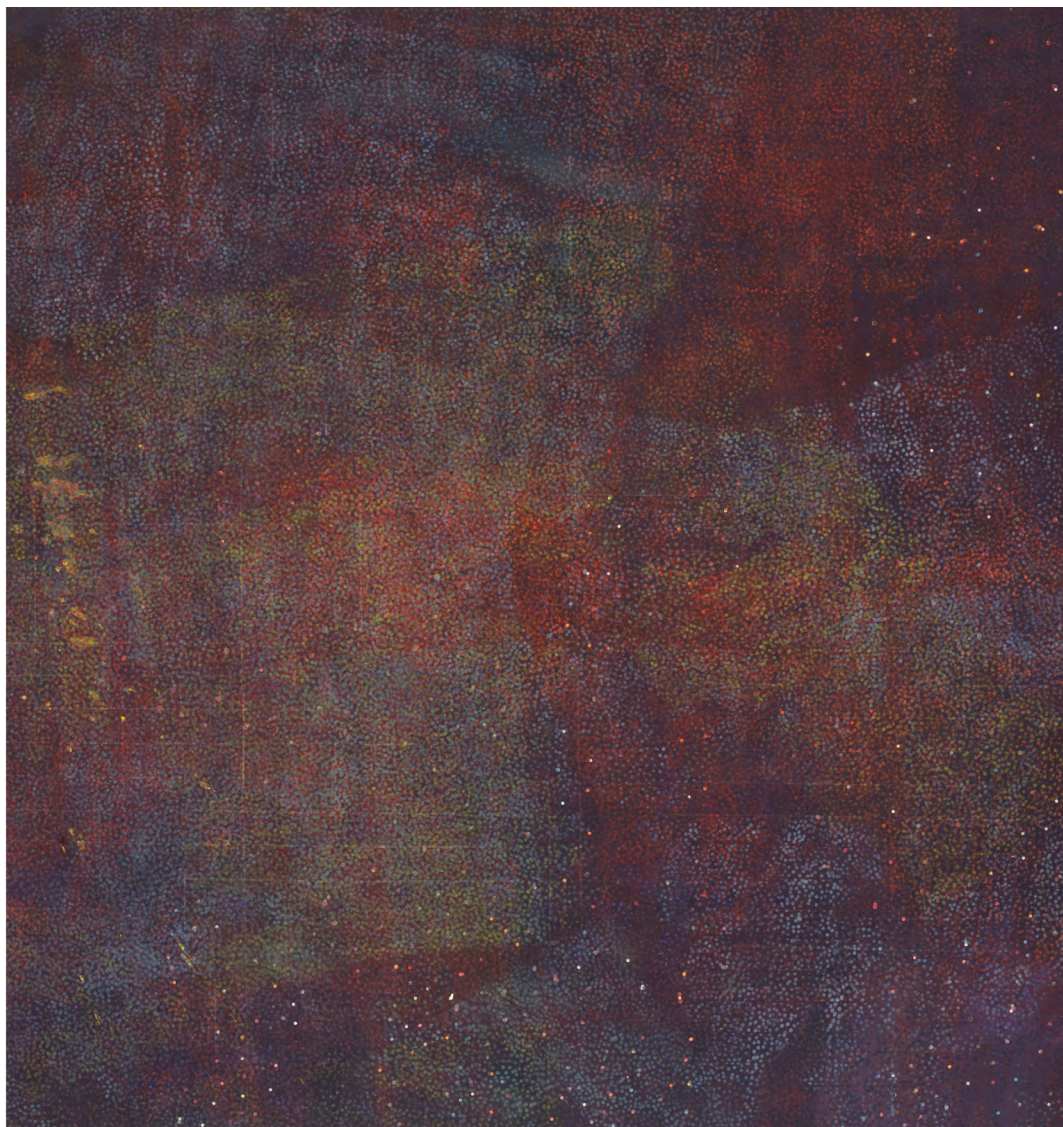


Critic's Picks: Five Outstanding Artworks at Art Basel Miami Beach

By ELISA TURNER DECEMBER 1, 2016



Howardena Pindell, *Untitled*, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 87 1/2 x 90 inches

I spent most of Tuesday, November 29, 2016, roaming the crowded aisles of Art Basel Miami Beach after it opened its doors for press and invited guests. As always, a variety of languages could be heard. Apparent long-time friends greeted each other effusively, as others were preoccupied with intense cell phone conversations. Many snapped digital photos. Others busily tapped on their iPads.

Causing the stir is the art. Quality is paramount at Art Basel Miami Beach (ABMB) with edgy contemporary video and installation art vying for attention with paintings and sculpture by 20th Century masters. This is, after all, the fair that begat the cultural juggernaut of Miami Art Week.

Hard to believe now, but until Art Basel came to Miami Beach — its first iteration presented outside of Basel, Switzerland — there had never been a major international art event held in the city between Thanksgiving and Christmas. ABMB's art fair predecessor, Art Miami, originally mounted its fair in January. Some even doubted if a late November or early December fair would attract enough attendees to make it work financially.

Art Basel's arrival to Miami Beach was a bumpy one. Originally planned for 2001, the first fair suffered an unexpected and dramatic setback amid elaborate plans and publicity in process. The 9/11 terrorist attacks were fresh and the inaugural Art Basel Miami Beach art fair was postponed for a year. The Miami art community pressed forward with plans already in place and enthusiastically staged a well-received series of events designed to welcome the first Art Basel Miami Beach. The rest of the story, of course, is history.

Following are my five picks for outstanding art I saw at this year's edition of Art Basel Miami Beach, presented in chronological order. These works are a joy and privilege to behold, if you love art for art's sake as this critic does, whether or not the price allows for the addition to your collection. The opportunity to see art works like those on my list is what I love about Art Basel Miami Beach every year.

***Untitled* by Howardena Pindell, 1972–1973**

Survey Section: Garth Greenan Gallery, Booth S11

The widely exhibited African-American artist Howardena Pindell (b. 1943) painted this *Untitled* not long after she earned an MFA from Yale University in 1967. The work is from the 1970s, when she was living in New York and starting to attract art world attention. Pindell's art began to reflect Black Power and feminist movements of the time. Her aesthetic was developing: she grew intrigued with using unorthodox materials and with traditional African art she could see in New York museums.

Untitled is an early example reflecting her interest in collaging painting with paper circles gathered by using a common hole-puncher on colored paper. What resulted is a richly colored abstraction, swirling with brilliant light and enigmatic shadows, composed of thousands of dots of color. Most of those dots are made by applying paint over stencils, but others come from the paper "dots" she has added over them. They give the painting an alluring three-dimensional texture. While looking back to French pointillism of the late 19th Century, the work could recall a night sky seen through a high-powered telescope. Nowadays, this painting could even be seen as a metaphor for a universe made up of endless diversity. Exhibited Garth Greenan Gallery (New York).