

Miami Recap: Detroit Representations

Nolan Simon, edited by Rachel Pontious

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Fall 2021 saw the return of the international art fair circuit in the Covid-19 era. The pivot to online viewing rooms had resulted in a significant drop in sales over the previous year and less audience engagement overall — suffice it to say galleries, artists and collectors were eager to get back to showing, seeing and discussing artworks that can be visited in person. After a stutter-start with the New York Armory Show in September, the art world’s year-end descent to Miami marked a true return to form for American art fairs.

Despite 2021 being a watershed year for many Detroit-based artists’ representation at the fairs, it seems to have gone largely unremarked upon. By my count, works by thirty three Detroit artists made their way down to Miami this past December, represented by twelve galleries across all the major fairs.



Maya Stovall “Neon Theatre” at Art Basel Miami with Reyes | Finn © Reyes | Finn

Notable among the presentations at Art Basel Miami Beach was Maya Stovall’s solo booth of nine works from her ongoing *Neon Theater* project (2019-present) with Reyes | Finn, an Art Basel debut for both the gallery and the artist. The subdued palette of the neon and generous amount of breathing room was a welcome moment of quiet and reflection in an otherwise frenetic atmosphere of the fair. Qualeasha Wood’s solo booth with New York’s Kendra Jayne Patrick featuring tufted rugs and hung tapestries exploring black queer femininity was very well received and exciting to see in person. Qualeasha, who graduated from Cranbrook’s Photography program in 2021, has works in “The New Bend,” a group exhibition curated by Legacy Russell opening February 3rd at Hauser and Wirth in New York as well as in the “Alter Egos | Projected Selves” exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Jessica Silverman Gallery’s booth featured works by Matthew Angelo Harrison, Margo Wolowiec and Conrad Egyir, whose large-scale Meridians project painting I sadly missed. Chicago’s Kavi Gupta Gallery installed a sleek four-part Beverly Fishman painting alongside an undulating hair bonding glue sculpture by Allana Clarke, who will have her first solo show at Kavi’s gallery in 2023. I also spotted a James Benjamin Franklin painting at Proyectos Monclova Mexico City (his solo show “Practice” just opened last week at Reyes | Finn), and of course, I visited my own painting at 47 Canal’s booth.



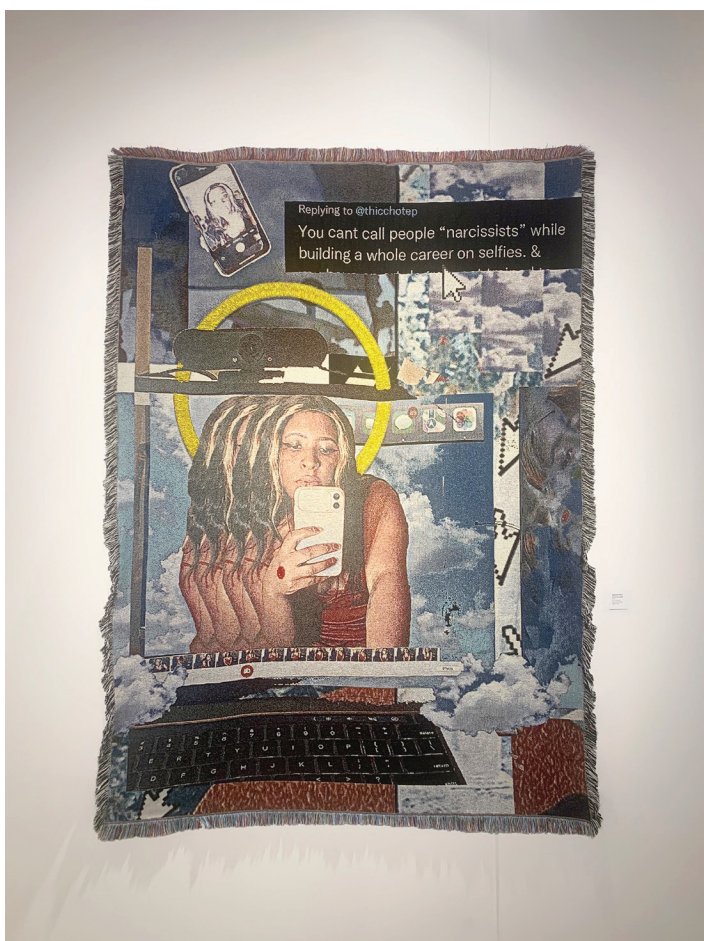
Nolan Simon at Art Basel Miami with 47 Canal © Nolan Simon

NADA's collection of smaller, younger galleries at the Ice Palace featured only one Detroit gallery, NADA veteran Simone DeSousa, who brought with her works by Carole Harris, Jova Lynne, and Neha Vedpathak. Another veteran, this time of Detroit painting, Allie McGhee, had work with Harper's. Inveterate New York paper maker Dieu Donne showed new paper works by LaKela Brown and Abdolreza Aminlari, both Detroit-born and educated, now living in New York. Miami-based Primary Projects' booth of Wade Tullier's playful ceramic sculptures, characters and objects was rumored to have sold out twice. Congrats Wade!

SCOPE Art Show, which has pivoted in recent years towards a particularly polished and cartoonish sub-genre of street art (and in 2021 gave over a portion of their entryway to IRL flat screen displays of NFTs), also featured a single Detroit

gallery, Playground Detroit. Co-Founders Paulina and Samantha brought works by ten Detroit-based artists (Bakpak Durden, Zoe Beaudry, Marlo Broughton, Frank Lepkowski, Michael Polakowski, Rachel Pontious, Caroline Del Giudice, Kaylie Kaitschuck, James Oscar Lee, and Patrick Ethen) which altogether looked like it would have felt more comfortable in the more casual enclave at the Ice Palace. Art Miami's lone Detroit gallery, David Klein, featured works by Susanne Goethel Campbell, Lavaughan Jenkins, Marianna Olague, Kelly Reemtsen, Jessica Rohrer, Rosalind Tallmadge, and Ricky Weaver.

Any attempt to draw an aesthetic or narrative arc threading together the works of thirty artists is an undertaking requiring precision and a careful sort of looking beyond the scope of an article like this. But I think it's safe to say that



Qualeasha Wood at Art Basel Miami with New York's Kendra Jayne Patrick © Nolan Simon



Matthew Angelo Harrison at Art Basel Miami with Jessica Silverman Gallery © Nolan Simon

Detroit's art community has entered a new period of professionalization and national attention. It could be argued that *all* art work is somehow ill-suited for the busy, noisy energy of a convention hall, but to my eyes many of the works I saw in Miami made by my Detroit-based neighbors and friends stood apart from the works around them. I was rewarded by slowing down and spending time with them. I, for one, would have liked to have seen What Pipeline at Art Basel,

marking their return to the scene after the last couple years hiatus. As with anything in the Covid era, only time will tell if 2021 represented a high-water mark for Detroit's galleries with all of us going back in and out of quarantine over the coming year(s), or if this really is the beginning of a new era in which Detroit begins to take up a greater footprint on the national art stage.



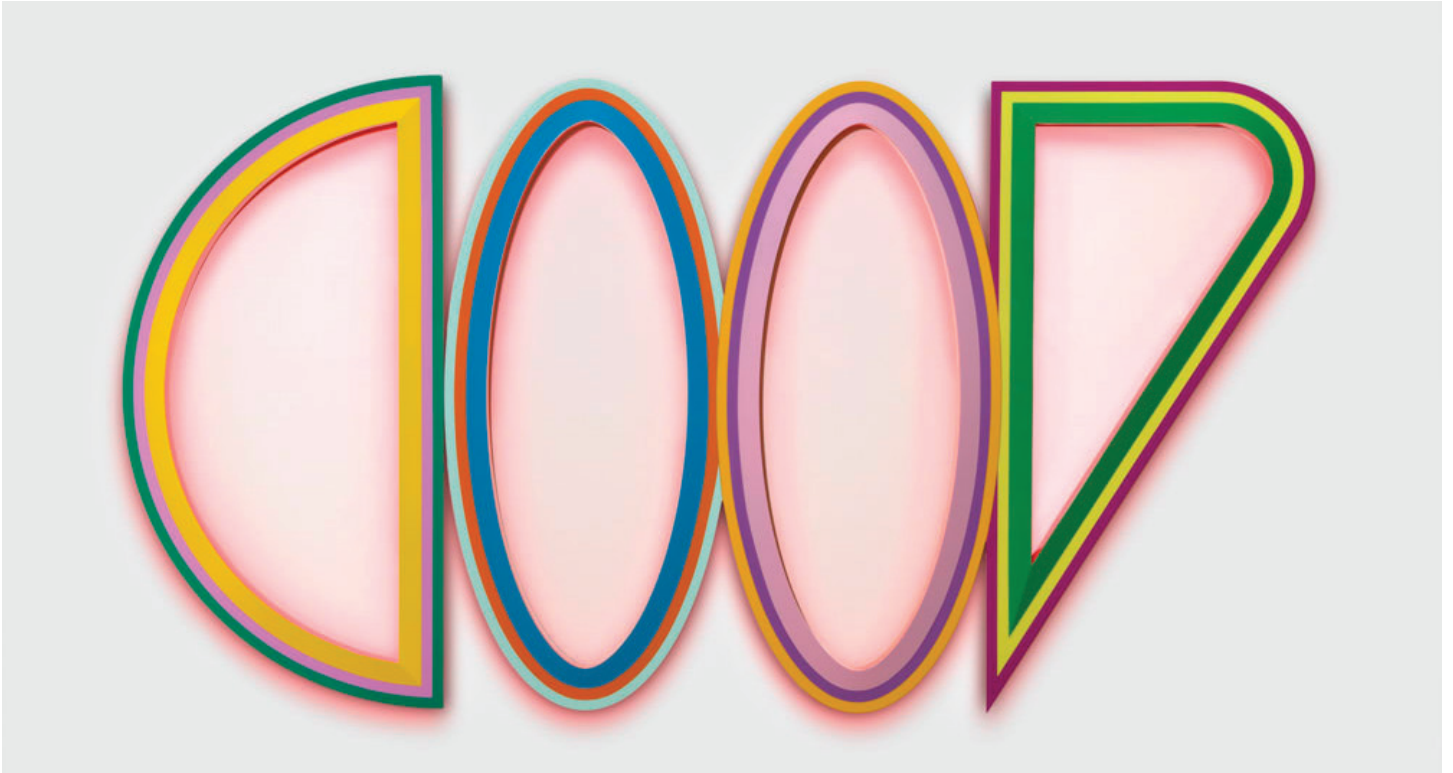
Margo Wolowiec at Art Basel Miami with Jessica Silverman Gallery © Nolan Simon



James Benjamin Franklin at Art Basel Miami with Proyectos Monclova Mexico City © Nolan Simon



Conrad Egyir at Art Basel Miami with Jessica Silverman Gallery © Jessica Silverman Gallery



Beverly Fishman at Art Basel Miami with Kavi Gupta © Kavi Gupta



Wade Tullier at NADA with Primary Projects © NADA



Allana Clarke at Art Basel Miami with Kavi Gupta © Kavi Gupta



Neha Vedpathak at NADA with Simone DeSousa © NADA



Carole Harris at NADA with Simone DeSousa © NADA



Jova Lynne at NADA with Simone DeSousa © NADA

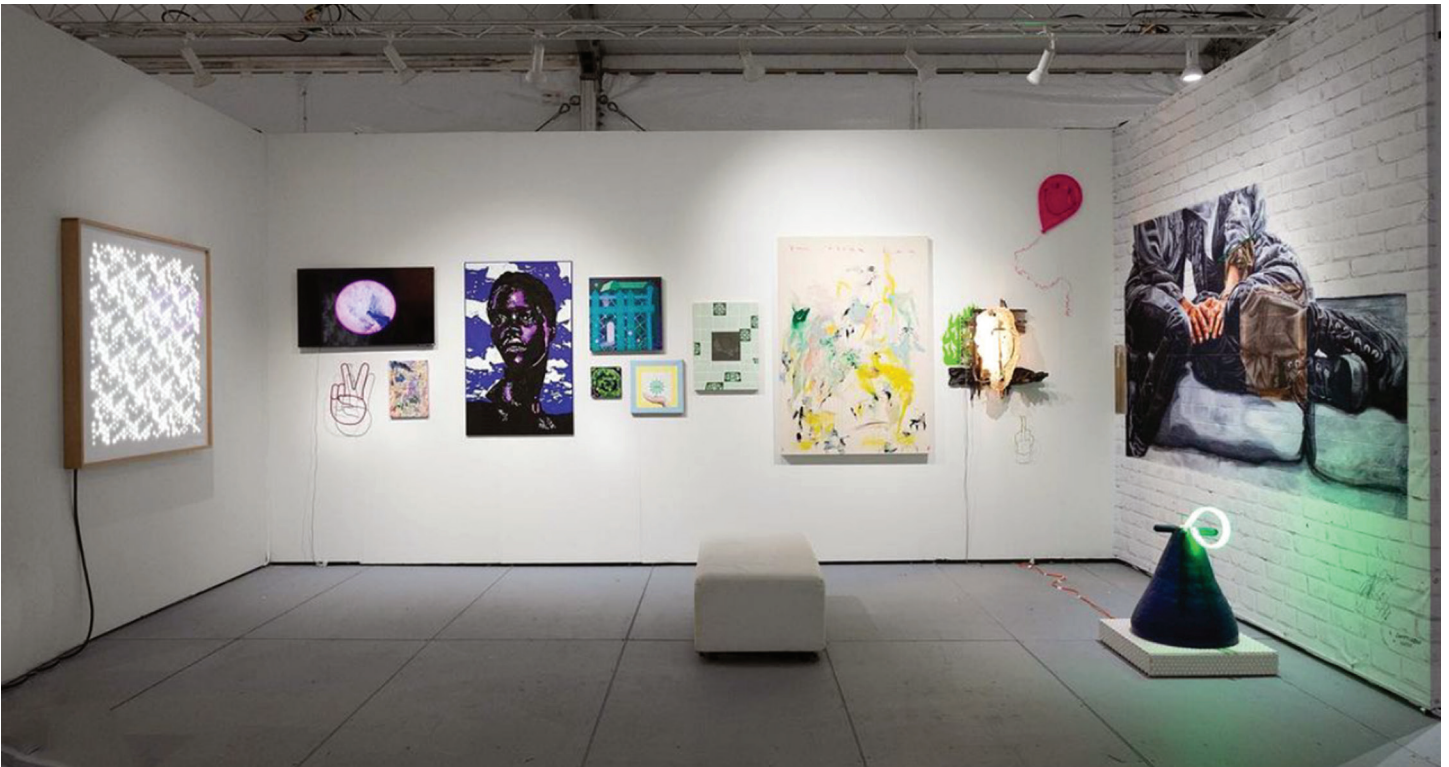
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Abdolreza Aminlari at NADA with Dieu Donne © NADA



LaKela Brown at NADA with Dieu Donne © NADA



Playground Detroit at SCOPE © Playground Detroit



David Klein at Art Miami © David Klein



Allie McGhee at Untitled Miami Beach with Harper's © Harper's Gallery

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