

11 / 30 / 2016

“The Freshmen: Four Art Basel Miami First-Timers to Know”
by Kat Herriman

T THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

The Freshmen: Four Art Basel Miami First Timers to Know

Over the past decade, the art-fair scene has exploded on an international level — offering dealers from around the globe a chance to connect with new audiences like never before. But the decision whether to participate in the fair hustle can be a risky one for smaller, less established galleries. What it costs in booth space, shipping, personnel and time might pay off in growth and exposure — or it might not. Here, four first-time exhibitors showing in the Art Basel Miami Beach pavilion weigh in on the importance of North America’s most anticipated fair.



Amy Yao's "Untitled (Work in Progress)," 2016. COURTESY OF VARIOUS SMALL FIRES

Various Small Fires, Los Angeles

Like Babin and Tsou, Various Small Fires owner Esther Kim Varet participates in several fairs a year and has been working toward landing a spot under the Art Basel umbrella. “As a young gallery, you always want to be in the main fair,” she says. “It’s like getting into a top-tier university, in that it legitimizes you in the eyes of others. Art Basel is a credential for collectors and curators alike.”

Varet applied to the fair with a solo presentation of work by Amy Yao, whose first solo show at the gallery last April won acclaim for its exploration of trade as it relates to agreements between the U.S.A. and China. “She is an artist who definitely deserves a spotlight moment,” Varet says. “The works from her show are going to have second, extended life in the fair.”

ABMB is just one of five fairs Varet and her team will tackle over the next six months, which means the dealer has to be careful about how she distributes her resources — including artwork. “A lot of our artists have waiting lists,” Varet explains. “It does limit the amount of fairs we can do. Our solution as a young gallery is that we will have to continue growing the roster, but my natural instinct is ‘less is more.’ I don’t know how, with a small staff, you can effectively steward a roster of 15 artists, so it’s a really challenging balance to strike.”