

Miami Art Week's \$547 Million Impact: A Playbook From Artists For CMOs

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I explore the luxury consumer's passionate pursuit of luxury.

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Dec 15, 2024, 01:33pm EST

Updated Dec 16, 2024, 09:15am EST



TOPSHOT - An aerial image shows people visiting the exhibition 'The Great Elephant Migration' a ... [+]

AFP via Getty Images

“There's so much support and appreciation for the arts in Miami and Miami Beach that culturally, it's just infused in everyone's way of thinking, in a way that is really special,” Bridget Finn, director of Art Basel Miami, enthused when asked why Miami Art Week is a prominent destination for one of the world's biggest fairs. “Miami is the geographical nexus point between North, South, and Central America.”

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Approximate Visitors Per Month & Potential Audience: 75,500,835

This distinctive mix of cultural crossroads, lifestyle allure, and artistic appreciation has made Miami a burgeoning epicenter for the global art scene. While Art Basel Miami Beach is *the* flagship art fair, with origins in the 1970 launch of Art Basel in Basel, Switzerland, its exclusivity and rigorous selection process have created fertile ground for [other fairs](#) to thrive during Miami Art Week.

In the first week of December, Miami hosted NADA Miami, established in 2003 and spotlighting emerging galleries and underrepresented voices; Scope Art Show, a cornerstone since 2002, featuring an eclectic mix of global contemporary art and experiential installations; Untitled Art, a South Beach mainstay of artistic dialogues, collaborations and a tightly curated selection of galleries and artists since 2012; Design Miami, the Art Basel Miami Beach adjacent show for furniture, lighting and decorative arts since 2005; Aqua Art Miami, whose 2005 launch offered an intimate setting for discovering emerging and mid-career talent, some unrepresented by galleries; and of course, sister fairs Art Miami and Context, established in 1990 and 2012, respectively, for seasoned collectors with broad interests.

As much as [Art Basel Miami Beach](#) commands most of the attention, it's the sheer diversity of artistic experiences that define the entire week. Eager to uncover what CMOs can learn from such a short time period that ultimately drove an [economic impact of \\$547 million](#), I set out to explore these alternative spaces bringing an elite audience to the Magic City.

Harry Benson at Art Miami, Miami Art Week: Get the Shot, Then Tell the Story



GREENWICH, CT - JUNE 11: Photographer Harry Benson "Harry Benson: Shoot First" event at the 2016 ... [+] getty

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Venturing into Art Miami 2024 led me to *Icons*, the retrospective exhibition of luminary photographer, Harry Benson, presented by [Gallery Got](#). Benson gave us the famous 1964 image of the Beatles having a pillow fight. He's captured everyone from Jackie O to Kate Moss, Andy Warhol to Amy Winehouse. His talent for pointing a camera in the right direction at the right time suggests the secret to immortality isn't found in the fountain of youth. It's instead found in the quick response of an intuitive photographer who knows how to make a precise moment in history live forever.

"If you can take a photograph of someone that hopefully gives the viewer some idea of what that person was like," Benson said. "Then future generations are given a gift that words alone cannot provide."

Over a seven-decade career, Benson has perfected the art of knowing exactly where to stand. Whether it's Steve Martin pretending his cat is dinner or Greta Garbo giving her best "I want to be alone" glare, Benson's ability to always get the shot is a lesson to this generation that great photography isn't built on hashtags and filters.



American boxer Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Clay) in bed in his hotel room, 15th February ... [+] Getty Images

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When asked about his process, “I try not to direct the moment, and just observe. Of course, with a comedian like Steve Martin, it doesn’t hurt if he puts his cat on his plate pretending to be his meal. A funny photo doesn’t pretend to be breaking news or anything. It is a fun photo of an amusing person.”

Benson’s approach is more about serendipity than happenstance. “I want to be the first in and last out if possible and photograph everything I see around me for it can become important later on. I try to photograph what I see and hopefully what I see will inform the viewer.”

The CMO Takeaway: As you pursue the cultural zeitgeist, channel Benson’s ethos. Observe, rather than orchestrate beyond providing the setting for your audience to engage. Then ensure you have a gifted artist able to capture those defining moments that can inspire your most memorable campaigns.

Ashley Longshore at Aqua Art, Miami Art Week: The Rebel with A Capitalistic Cause



MIAMI, FLORIDA - DECEMBER 04: Ashley Longshore attends AQUA Art Miami Opening Night at the Aqua ... [+] Getty Images for AQUA Art Miami

“Much of what I do is a rebellion of the way I was raised,” Ashley Longshore shared in an email before we met. “I was raised to be a trophy wife, be skinny, be polite, marry rich, have a big house, gorgeous children, never raise my voice to a man. Never be disagreeable. I found that to be quite boring and wanted to make money like a man. Buy what I want without permission. I didn’t want to have to ask a man for a damn thing! My rebellion, my work ethic, my talent and my love for profanity

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have driven me to where I am now. I love that I was raised with manners, but I also love that I cuss like a sailor and have a giant metaphorical cock.”

How could I not make time to meet such a dynamic *force*? I adjusted my [already overwhelmed schedule](#) to make a quick stop at Aqua Art Miami exclusively to connect with Longshore.

Walking into Longshore’s booth was like stepping into a social experiment disguised as a party. \$30,000 in crisp \$1 bills covered the floor, forming a tangible temptation for anyone audacious enough to reach down. This was also the stage she set for her preview party the night prior. The smell of money hit attendees first, followed by disbelief: *“Is this real?”*

“Yes, it’s real,” Longshore would reply, watching gears turn in the attendees’ minds. Some cautiously scooped up a handful of bills, stacking them neatly as if to claim their prize. The moment of truth came when she asked: *“Do you think you’ve earned it?”* For many, the question was enough to bring the bills fluttering back to the floor.

“Most people would say no,” Longshore recounted. They would mumble something about morals and walk away empty-handed. But as the night wore on—and as the tequila flowed—those morals began to falter. Some guests began shuffling through the cash with wild abandon, gathering fistfuls as they rationalized why they deserved a cut of Longshore’s hard-earned wealth.

I wish I’d been a fly on the wall during that opening reception, watching how people shifted from hesitation to entitlement in real time. Longshore described what was ultimately a performance piece captured on video as peeling back layers of social conditioning—first decorum, then guilt, and then, inevitably, greed. Whether they knew it or not, the attendees became part of the art as they displayed their personal values on entitlement, earned wealth, and morality.

“I wanted to see what people would do,” Longshore explained. “At first, most were hesitant—asking if they could take it, questioning whether they deserved it. But as the night wore on and the tequila flowed, let’s just say some inhibitions disappeared.”



MIAMI, FLORIDA - DECEMBER 04: Ashley Longshore attends AQUA Art Miami Opening Night at the Aqua ... [+] Getty Images for AQUA Art Miami

Humor, provocation, and commentary run through all of Longshore's work, with financial independence as the foundation on which she's building her empire. She speaks about it with the same conviction she brings to her art. Money isn't just power. It's freedom.

"If you're a woman and you're financially independent, your power word is *no*. You can love who you want, live where you want, and do what you want."

When asked why she refuses gallery representation and self-funds both her booth at Aqua and her [New York City gallery](#), Longshore responded, "Simple. Giving up 50% is a horrible feeling. It's financially abusive. 50% is wholesale cuts on mass produced items, not original art. No other industry does this other than the music industry. I will unapologetically tell you that I want to be rich. I am an American woman. I want the cookie! The whole cookie! Not half a cookie! Also, they rejected me and told me I wasn't marketable. Now, they can kiss my ass. I did it myself."

The CMO Takeaway: Smart brands like Gucci, Porsche, and Judith Leiber have clutched their pearls all the way to the bank by collaborating with Longshore. Her insistence on full creative control mirrors the need for brands to refuse compromises that will eventually dilute their identity. Authenticity builds trust. The newer generation of consumers love brands that don't apologize for who they are. Balance this understanding to draw a newer audience, and trust your existing audience will find excitement in your daring spirit.

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GeoVanna Gonzalez: Charting A Flowing Pathway Through Miami Art Week



Miami, Florida, USA - September 12, 2018: Sunny day at Wolfson campus in the Miami Dade College. ... [+] getty

Amid the high energy of Miami Art Week, some artists chose to side step the fray to create spaces for quiet reflection. [GeoVanna Gonzalez](#), a Miami-based artist deeply connected to the city's cultural fabric, did just that with the opening of *Flowing Pathways*, her public installation presented by the Museum of Art and Design at Miami Dade College during a week otherwise dominated by satellite fairs. Inspired by the rivers shaping Miami and the Caribbean, Gonzalez uses her work to explore cycles of metamorphosis and renewal. The installation meditates on belonging, of exploring unspoken ties connecting each of us and the spaces we share.

“Rivers symbolize resilience and continuity,” she said. “They evoke themes of movement, diasporic connectivity, and the cycles of cultural and ecological renewal. Rivers serve as metaphors for transformation and cultural flows, blending histories and connecting individuals to their ancestral roots. They represent forward motion and regeneration, mirroring the complex ecosystems of cultural identity and survival.”

Geometric and organic forms interplay within *Flowing Pathways*, creating dueling narratives of structure and freedom, constraint and liberation. Walking through the installation, visitors experience a duality, where openness greets them – before then having to navigate a determined path. *Flowing Pathways* is a living space shaped by one's personal experience, leaving the audience to examine how their life journeys and decisions have defined their identity. Questions of history, memory, and

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resilience ripple through the installation, asking you what it truly means to exist within shared environments.

“How do we define ourselves in relation to others and our surroundings?” Gonzalez posed. “I hope visitors feel curiosity, empathy, and a heightened awareness of their role within shared environments. Questions such as ‘How do we reconcile the legacies of colonialism with contemporary expressions of identity and connection?’ and emotions like longing, resilience, and solidarity are central to the work. By reflecting on the interconnectedness of community and memory, I aim to inspire meaningful conversations.”

The CMO Takeaway: In designing an experiential campaign embodying Gonzalez’s motif, whether in person or digitally, create interactive spaces inviting your audience to move through a structured narrative grounded in a sense of your brand’s historical and cultural identity while designing moments of open-ended inquiry. Personal interpretation is a powerful tool for transforming a passive audience into active participants in your brand story.

The Wrap-Up: Marketing Insights from Miami Art Week



MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA - DECEMBER 7: An interactive sculpture adorned with cast coral shapes titled On ... [+] Getty Images

Miami Art Week is simultaneously an art lover’s paradise and an education in branding, storytelling, and audience engagement. The \$547 million economic impact marks its role as a driving force for luxury markets, tourism, and global
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cultural conversations, particularly in Miami. For CMOs, the week paints a rich canvas of nuanced marketing strategy rooted in moments of truth, self-expression and shared experiences.

- **Authenticity and Observation:** Benson’s ethos underscores the importance of capturing the essence of a moment without manipulation. This translates into brand strategy as the need for authenticity—creating campaigns reflecting the world as it is, while presenting the brand’s role as a thoughtful observer and curator of cultural significance.
- **Unapologetic Identity and Audacity:** Longshore’s insistence on authenticity and refusal to compromise her creative control speaks to a brand’s ability to stand firmly in its identity. Brands daring to express themselves fully and unapologetically can capture newer audiences while energizing their existing base. Balance self-assurance with a willingness to disrupt norms to foster loyalty and excitement in the process.
- **Immersive Engagement and Participation:** Gonzalez’s work exemplifies the power of shared spaces where audiences are invited to co-create meaning. For CMOs, this means designing campaigns that move beyond one-way communication to interactive, experiential moments where audiences feel they are a part of the story. Encouraging personal interpretation builds emotional connections, and turns consumers into advocates.

As Miami Art Week grows in influence, its lessons extend far beyond the art world. The city’s role as a cultural and geographic nexus, as Bridget Finn described, is evident in the diversity of perspectives and creativity showcased during the week. For those paying attention, it’s a reminder the most successful brand campaigns understand the pursuit of luxury is indeed a passionate – an authentic, an immersive and an emotion-driven – endeavor.

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