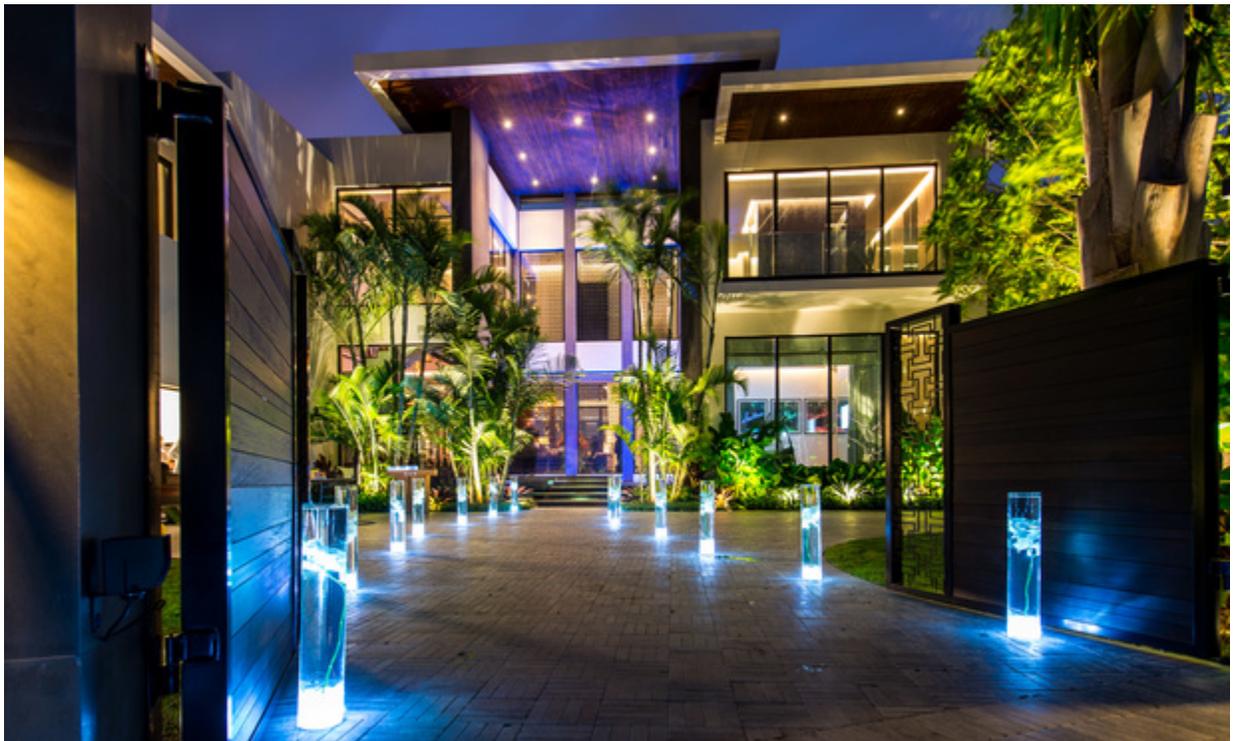


Brokers Target Potential Buyers During Art Basel

Carla Vianna, Daily Business Review

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Park Bay House, listed by EWM, a seven-bedroom mansion in Miami Beach can be yours for \$25.5 million.



The mansion at 6466 N. Bay Road is listed for \$25.5 million.

For some, this was their first time on the island.

Dozens traveled by private yacht or ferry — the primary access to Fisher Island, Miami's wealthiest and most secluded enclave across Government Cut from South Beach — for an event at the lavish Palazzo del Sol, the first condominium tower completed on the island in eight years.

The private soiree marked the kickoff of Miami Beach's Art Basel, one of the largest art fairs in the world that has grown into a weeklong festival, giving luxury real estate brokers unparalleled access to the most affluent buyers. The art fair lures thousands of collectors from around the world with pockets deep enough to shop for art and cast their eyes on its luxury homes.

The Wednesday evening event at Palazzo del Sol, hosted by the Royal Bank of Canada, welcomed about 70 art enthusiasts in the top 1 percent. On hand were four brokers, who, if approached by curious attendees, led them to three designer residences up for grabs.

"If you take a tour, you enter into a drawing to stay here tonight," Lauren Marks, who manages marketing efforts for Palazzo del Sol, jokingly announced to the high-class crowd mingling over an impressive raw bar in the main lobby, which features an outdoor terrace overlooking Biscayne Bay.

Marks noted purchasing real estate is at most a secondary objective for Art Basel goers, but co-hosting an event with the Canadian bank's private wealth division helped expose the property to an exclusive buyer pool.

"It's hard to really get targeted and qualified crowds, generally speaking," Marks told the Daily Business Review. "There is so much noise during Basel that you really have to be strategic to make it work for you. The exclusivity factor that we have to offer is appealing to these types of people who came in."

More than half of the guests asked for tours, she said.

While brokers say the Basel season is more for getting their properties on the map rather than closing hard sales, this year's event may signal what's ahead for the region's luxury market, which has been struggling with fewer sales and an inflated inventory over the past year.

The slowdown in luxury sales is attributed to a number of factors, including devalued foreign currencies, the Zika virus scare, the presidential election and political troubles abroad.

The area's pricey housing market also [fell under federal scrutiny](#) this year when the Treasury Department identified the region as a hotbed for real estate-driven money laundering. The department ordered title companies to identify the buyers using limited liability companies to purchase pricey homes.

Whatever the cause, the effect reveals itself in a sharp decrease in international buyers. Two years ago, they accounted for 42 percent of Miami-Dade County housing sales worth over \$1 million across compared with only 34 percent today.

"That obviously accounts for some of our reduction in sales this past year because that's a significant percentage of the international buyers," said Ron Shuffield, president and CEO of Esslinger Wooten Maxwell.

Brokers, who are known for their perpetually sunny outlooks, remain optimistic, using the Art Basel platform to reach potential buyers.

EWM, through its affiliation with Christie's International Realty, has routinely set up shop at Art Miami, a fair in Miami's Wynwood Arts District that coincides with Art Basel.

But more important than marketing properties to the hundreds of passersby are the private events hosted at EWM's listings, Shuffield said.

"We're selling a lifestyle as much as we are selling bricks and mortar," he said. "When you're in one of these homes, and there's a dinner and a live speaker there, you just get a great feel for how it is to live there."

This year the firm will invite visitors to the Park Bay House, a seven-bedroom mansion in Miami Beach carrying a \$25.5 million price tag.

"People at that level, they often have two, three, four homes already around the world," Shuffield said. "They're looking for the experience of a lifestyle."

The turnout for this year's festival seems lower than usual, ONE Sotheby's International Realty president Daniel de la Vega noted in the week before the formal opening. The real estate community, including real estate firms and developers, is being more strategic in marketing efforts this year, he added. ONE Sotheby's, which no longer signs on as an art fair sponsor, is instead partnering with brands like Rolls-Royce to reach a more targeted crowd.

"There's so many events this time of year that everyone is competing with everybody," he said. "More so than locking in specific sales, on a more macrolevel it's about continuing to create awareness of what's happening here in South Florida and in Miami specifically."

Real estate powerhouse Douglas Elliman has partnered with Art Basel for the past four years, marketing several of its high-end properties from London to Miami at the fair's VIP Collectors Lounge.

But it's a busy week, and people are distracted by the plethora of parties and art surrounding them, said Susan de Franca, the company's president and CEO.

The latest real estate boom has brought with it a new era of high-end design as condo developers partnered with world-renowned architects to shape the area's latest crop of high-rises.

Douglas Elliman is using the region's newfound architectural significance to highlight its properties. The firm is hosting "design talks" with figures like Piero Lissoni, who designed the Ritz-Carlton Residences in Miami Beach, and Pritzker Prize-winner Jean Nouvel, who designed Monad Terrace, a South Beach condo launching sales this month.

De Franca said her team has made several sales across its South Florida portfolio in the days ahead of the festival, so it's "looking like a strong season thus far."