

## A New Brand of Luxury Sponsorship Piques “Curiosity”

by Rea McNamara 09/12/13 2:32 PM EST



Kolkoz's "Curiosity" chalet opposite Miami Marine Stadium  
(Kolkoz, Audemars Piguet and Galerie Perrotin)

MIAMI —  
“Curiosity,” an  
installation piece by French artist duo **Kolkoz** for **Art Basel in Miami Beach**, is a  
refreshing and even playful take on luxury brands’ sponsorship of public art.

The aptly-named inflatable, snow-covered chalet floating in front of the disused modernist **Miami Marine Stadium** off Biscayne Bay, certainly piques interest.

Yet, you couldn't tell just by looking at the sculpture that it is presented by Swiss luxury watch manufacturer **Audemars Piguet**, which has been an associate Art Basel sponsor since December 2012.

"You don't see a single mention of our name here," **François-Henry Bennahmias**, CEO of Audemars Piguet, told **BLOUIN ARTINFO**. "We wanted to respect the work of the artist."

While the *haute horlogerie* brand's presence can be felt in a booth at Art Basel's Collector's Lounge, featuring a retrospective of their Royal Oak model and an exhibition of works by British photographer **Dan Holdsworth**, Bennahmias emphasized that the brand had no involvement in steering the direction of "Curiosity," which was jointly supported by **Galerie Perrotin**, the Paris-based gallery that represents Kolkoz alongside **Maurizio Cattelan** and **Takashi Murakami**. "They were already working on it [when] we heard about it. We came together, and finalized the deal," he said. "So they kept their true spirit of freedom."

More importantly, this art tourism destination charts new waters in terms of the public art projects typically commissioned by luxury brands during Art Basel. While deemed a satellite Art Basel project because it lacked a curator, "Curiosity" deviates from the norm at a time when weariness for heavily branded works and limited edition artist-designed product lines is creeping in.

The installation is also expected to help draw attention to the \$30 million campaign currently underway to renovate the Miami Marine Stadium, and the desire to bring in more blue-chip investment to the campaign. (So far, \$13 million has been raised, and in October, **American Express** committed \$80,000 to the cause.)

The stadium was in the 1960s a gleaming, open-air facility that hosted power boat races, operas, and even rock concerts. But after the devastation of Hurricane Andrew in 1992, the stadium was abandoned, and now its 6,566 seats are street art canvases for colorful graffiti tags. It ended up being "the perfect bad place for this chalet," said **Benjamin Moreau**, one half of Kolkoz.

“This rooftop is one of the biggest cantilevered structures in the United States,” said **Samuel Boutruche**, the duo’s other half. “Can you believe they wanted to destroy this thing?”

Alluding to Audemars Piguet’s wintery home in the Vallée de Joux, the chalet floated on the water, resembling an iceberg curiously not melting in the December heat. “It was cool to be out of the mess of the fair,” quipped Moreau.



*The artists just outside "Curiosity".*

Last year, the artist duo **Kolkoz** unveiled its first environmental paradox at Art Basel by resurfacing South Beach into a lunar-scape soccer field called “Luna Park”. The re-creation of an Apollo 11 lunar landing site on a Miami Beach football pitch was deemed by some critics to be the [standout Art Basel spectacle](#).

Long preoccupied with encounters between the real and the virtual, Kolkoz this time settled on the seemingly out-of-place counterpoint between a picturesque chalet — replete with faux-wood surface and a fireplace burning with red, **Dan Flavin**-like neon tubes — and the Miami tropics as a means of exploring the past and present of “cosmopolitan architecture”. As **Marc-Olivier Wahler**, founder and director of the Chalet Society in Paris, writes in an essay on the work shared in press notes: “Given its nomadic and world

characteristics, it is not a stretch to say the chalet is associated with the idea of conquering new territory,” citing its mid-nineteenth century invention as demonstrative of “the architectural expression of bourgeois individualism.”

When exploring partnerships in the art world, Bennehmias seems less interested in borrowing cachet to further Audemar’s products, which are already revered as some of the finest Swiss watchmaking specimens in history. [Yayoi Kusama x Louis Vuitton-type collaborations](#) are not on the cards for the house at the moment, according to the exec.

“What for? When a painter comes into our world and sees our top watchmakers pull these watches together, they are amazed ... it’s a completely different mindset,” he said. “What would [a collaboration amount to other than be] a fake thing? There’s no need.”

For a city that in recent years has owned many of its new condominium towers and hotels to luxury brands’ sponsorship of Art Basel, it’s refreshing for the focus to shift towards historical preservation.

As Miami mayor **Tomás Regalado** said at a media briefing at the site: “Who would have thought that a Swiss chalet would be floating here in the bay of Miami? Tonight we can celebrate an important moment for art and history.”