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Art Basel Miami Beach 2018: Serena Williams, Painter

Williams popped up her Serena line at the Faena Bazaar, where she displayed some of her own paintings.

By [Leigh Nordstrom](#) on December 6, 2018



Forget the Convention Center and its many exhibitions — Serena Williams is here at [Art Basel](#) with her paintings, and they come with a side of fashion, as well.

Williams, herself a Floridian, traveled to Miami to open a pop-up of her Serena clothing line on Wednesday night at the Faena Bazaar; the walls of the shop were lined with Williams' own paintings.

“It’s something else that I do — don’t ask me where I have time for it,” Williams said of her side hobby, between mingling with guests like Caroline Wozniacki and Audemars Piguet ceo François-Henry Bennahmias. Shoppers browsed the pieces with cotton-candy adorned cocktails, provided by the night’s sponsor, Beefeater.

Motioning toward a red painting on the wall, she explained it was about capturing layers of emotions. “This particular one I did a couple of years ago and it’s a part of our texture series, and it talks about emotions and anger and the layers of it that you have,” she said. “And I really feel like sometime you only see one layer of that. But it goes deeper. And there’s also meaning behind that: it’s from hurt, it’s from being abused, it talks about that, going through different violence. Like a friend of my sister died of gun violence. It’s all those layers that a person has in them. And really, that’s what the whole collection is about. As a human, you don’t really see those layers that we will walk around with. You only really see one. But this really represents all the layers under.”

Williams has been painting for upward of 10 years. “I didn’t bring my oldest pieces. I should’ve but I didn’t,” she said.

The Serena line launched earlier this summer, and Williams said throwing events like the Basel pop-up gave her renewed passion for what she’s doing with the brand.

“Every time our customer comes to our events or comes to our store and sees it in person, they’re like ‘oh my God, this is so high quality.’ We’re strictly e-commerce, though we like to go and pop up in different places. We were just in L.A., we’re going to Dallas, we’re here for the month, we were in New York,” she said. “And one thing that helped me start this collection was like, ‘I want high-quality stuff, but I don’t want to pay \$500, \$1000 for it.’ And our stuff is super high-quality, but everything is under \$200. That was really important to me.”

As for the rest of her Basel plans? “I’m going to stay here for a little while. It’s going to be fun,” she said. And that might be the last bit of fun for her for a while: she’s sitting the holidays out this year.

“I don’t celebrate holidays; in fact I’m leaving Christmas to start training, to start playing tournaments,” she said.