

Art World

Metallica's Former Bassist Is Showing at Art Miami and Nothing Else Matters

The Grammy-winning bassist took up painting after leaving the heavy metal band.

Eileen Kinsella, November 9, 2017



Former Metallica bassist Jason Newsted in his studio in Jupiter Island, Florida in front of *Jesus Lizard* (2007). Courtesy InJupiter Magazine.

Having toured the world as the bassist for Metallica for 15 years, musician Jason Newsted didn't quite know what to do with himself after leaving the heavy metal band in 2001. A serious shoulder injury a couple years later didn't help matters. That's when the six-time Grammy winner and Rock and Roll Hall of Famer—who had no real formal training as an artist—began to pick up the various paintbrushes and materials that his art school-educated wife, Nicole, had lying around the house.

"I told myself I wasn't going to look at any books about other artists," Newsted told artnet News in a phone interview from Jupiter Island in Florida, where he

lives. “I was just going to take experience from my own life and what I saw traveling around the world.”

But as he began to focus more on his art-making, he admits he started paying more attention to the work of artists he admired, including Picasso, Jean Fautrier, and Jean Dubuffet. By that time, Newsted said he was also quite familiar with the work of Willem de Kooning and Jean-Michel Basquiat, thanks to bandmate and Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich who was already a major art collector by the early 90s. (Christie’s sold Ulrich’s 1982 Basquiat painting, *Untitled (Boxer)*, for \$13.5 million in November 2008).



Jason Newsted, *Rockstar* (2006). Courtesy the artist.

Living in California in the early aughts, Newsted pursued both art and various music projects after leaving the band. Eventually, he became so serious about his painting that he bought the house next door and turned it into a studio.

This past winter, a chance meeting and subsequent visit from Art Miami director Nick Korniloff to Newsted’s Florida home sparked a major new initiative that will see Newsted’s work featured as a highlight of the upcoming Art Miami fair (December 5–10), which debuts in a new location on Biscayne Bay this year.

Newsted’s large-scale paintings will be featured in a booth for the Perry J. Cohen Foundation, which Korniloff and his wife Pamela Cohen founded in memory of their son Perry, who was lost at sea off the Florida coast in July 2015. Half of all proceeds from the sale of the artwork will go to the PJC Foundation, which supports arts, marine, and wildlife education and preservation, among other initiatives. Newsted’s paintings are priced between \$20,000 and \$125,000.

The musician recounted how Korniloff, a heavy metal fan, had come to his house to see his “jam room” this past February. Korniloff inquired about the large, outsider-style paintings “hanging between the drums and amplifiers,”

and wanted to know who the artist was. “I said ‘It’s my stuff, man.’” Impressed, Korniloff asked if there was more, which prompted Newsted to show him more than a decade’s worth of his art stash.



Jason Newsted, *Bill Evans* (2006). Courtesy the artist.

With Korniloff’s Art New York art fair just six weeks away, he urged Newsted to put his work in the Perry Cohen foundation booth, where it would hang alongside that of famous rock photographer Bob Gruen. Newsted happily accepted and was blown away by the response. He contrasted the experience with an earlier solo show in San Francisco, in 2010, saying: “I paid for advertising, I actively tried to sell paintings. I competed like I would with music.”

This time around, he says, “I put a bunch of my best stuff forward, and it got a lot of attention. Two to three large paintings were selling at one time. It was legitimization for me.” Newsted adds that though he never actually met Korniloff’s son Perry in person, he often saw him out and about on his boat from his perch on the water in Jupiter Island.

Asked about the parallels between his life in music and his artistic life, Newsted, replied, “there are definitely commonalities because it’s show business and you still have to deal with the business and legal side so that’s very relatable.” On the other hand, being a solo artist painting on his own “means I’m not on a team. I don’t have to answer to anybody, but that part I actually like because of the control factor. I like to take the bad with the good. When it’s bright, it’s super-bright, and when it’s not, you’ve got to take that too.”

Following another exhibit at Art New York’s 2018 spring edition, Paris gallery 55 Bellechase will assume global representation of his work.



Jason Newsted, *Brothers of the Head* (2007). Courtesy the artist.

As if Art Miami is not keeping him busy enough, the Palm Beach Cultural Council is opening a separate Newsted exhibit, "The Art of Rawk" on December 1, a few days ahead of Art Miami. Curated by Korniloff, it will show everything from his paintings, drawings, video installations, and sculpture, to musical instruments used on famous Metallica and other recordings and even, says Newsted, a bass-bearing action figure in his likeness.

Newsted's current band, Chop House, will have two live performances during the show, and a portion of the sale proceeds of artwork will also go toward the PJC Foundation and a music education charity called "Little Kids Rock."

Noting that the Cultural Council will give away about \$4.5 million in grants this year, president and CEO Rena Blades told artnet News that the Newsted show fits with its mission "of making sure artists who live in Palm Beach county are able to do whatever their art is, whether its making music or making visual art."

Blades described the Council's exhibition space as "a beautiful old 1940 streamlined building" in Lake Worth, Florida, just southwest of Palm Beach. She added: "Not many people know that Jason has been doing visual art now for about a decade. This is sort of his coming out now with us."