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Galerie

9 Must-See Artworks in Art Basel's New Meridians Sector in Miami Beach

Dedicated to monumental, museum-worthy installations, videos, and paintings, the inaugural Meridians section is not to be missed

Art fairs need to continuously stay fresh, even Art Basel in Miami Beach, which has a reputation for being the art world's favorite party. Looking to add a bit of zest to its exhibition program, this year the fair is inaugurating its new Meridians sector to present large-scale works and performances in the refurbished Miami Beach Convention Center's 60,000 square-foot Grand Ballroom.

"From what I've observed in the past, the curatorial and museum crowd has gotten tired of coming to Miami for only booth presentations, but by bringing more of a curatorial edge to it, I'm hearing that curators are more excited to attend this year," Ben Strauss-Malcolm, a director at Pace, which has two artists—Adam Pendleton and Fred Wilson—in the show, tells *Galerie*.

Presenting 34 large-scale sculptures, paintings, installations, performances, and film and video projections by an international group of established and emerging artists, the projects were chosen by a selection committee and have been organized by the show's curator, Magalí Arriola, the director of Mexico City's Museo Tamayo.



Tom Friedman, *Cocktail Party*, 2015.

Photo: Courtesy Stephen Friedman Gallery and Luhring Augustine

With a focus on artists and works from the Americas—although its somewhat broader in this initial year because not as many galleries applied—the show addresses issue of

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race, gender and immigration, which are topics that are floating around the greater art world.

“Many of the works are content-loaded, which is an exciting part of it,” Arriola shared by phone from Miami, where she was already working on the installation. “I’m happy with the space and layout and the individual projects. I believe these bigger works give viewers a chance to grasp what’s behind the artists’ proposals. There are overarching themes that echo between the varied works, which makes the whole section quite compelling.”



Portia Munson, *The Garden*, 1996.

Photo: Courtesy of P.P.O.W

But being Art Basel, this doesn’t come cheaply. Similar to Unlimited at Art Basel in Basel, galleries are paying additional fees to participate in Meridians and have to ship and install these larger, often-complex artworks. “We’ve shipped a truckload of broken-down furniture, hippie dresses, scores of plastic objects and flowers, and old stuffed animals, which had to be fire-proofed, from the Catskills to Florida at great expense,” Wendy Osloff shared when discussing P.P.O.W’s presentation of a room-size installation by Portia Munson.

Galleries, however, need an adequate amount of space to show such large-scale works, which is beyond the capacity of a traditional booth. (Though most of the galleries exhibiting in this sector will have a work or two by their Meridians artists displayed there, too.) Art Basel’s reach brings in important institutional curators, who could potentially show the work, and international collectors, who have private museums they need to fill.

“It’s worth the costs to get your artists shown in this setting, especially in the inaugural year,” Thomas Kelly, a partner at Sean Kelly, which is presenting projects by Chi-Tsung Wu and Jose Dávila, reveals to Galerie. “I can’t think of a better circumstance than to present work in the first edition of Meridians. It’s going to garner a lot of attention and be the focal point of the fair.”

See *Galerie’s* specially curated selection of standout works below:

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Chi-Tsung Wu, Cyano-Collage 064, 2019.
Photo: Courtesy Sean Kelly

Chi-Tsung Wu's Cyano-Collage 064 Sean Kelly

To create this sublime blue mountainous landscape, artist Chi-Tsung Wu employs age-old methods in the most innovative of ways, combining a 19th-century photographic printing process known as cyanotype together with the tradition of ancient Chinese landscape painting. To begin, Wu first coats chemically treated crumpled sheets of thin Xuan (rice) paper with an emulsion that turns the paper a deep blue after being exposed to light, before flattening them and collaging the hundreds of pieces onto linen canvas. With no predetermined design in mind, the artist constructs the imaginative scene, which simulates traditional Chinese mountain water (shan sui) paintings, as he goes—becoming a witness to the making of his work. Having a kind of tie-dye effect on the rice paper allows him to create the jagged rocks and snowy peaks and valleys that lend a modulated look to the layered landscape.