

See Highlights From Art Basel Miami Beach's New 'Meridians' Section, Where the Fair's Biggest (and Best) Artworks Shine

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Art Basel's new features impressive works like Portia Munson's 'The Garden,' which sold quickly.

Ahead of today's VIP opening of Art Basel Miami Beach, the fair unveiled its highly anticipated Meridians sector, featuring 34 large-scale artworks in the convention center's second floor ballroom. Curated by Magalí Arriola, the director of Mexico City's Museo Tamayo, Meridians gives galleries the chance to showcase works that might overwhelm a typical fair booth, including a number of historical pieces, some of which haven't been shown in years.

With that in mind, dealers almost certainly have their sights set on institutional buyers, who are the most likely to have the space to accommodate such ambitious works. Steve Wilson, collector and founder of the 21c Museum Hotels chain, for instance, snapped up Portia Munson's *The Garden* (1996), a room-sized installation chock full of artificial flowers and other colorful manufactured objects, for \$225,000 from New York's PPOW Gallery.

"It's very exciting," said the artist of the sale to Artnet News. "It's going to live on in a really good way." Munson noted that she was thrilled that the complex work would no longer languish in storage.

When deciding what to display at the new sector, Munson's piece was the obvious choice for gallery co-founder Wendy Olsoff. "For Meridians, you have to have a piece that's a whole installation," she explained. "This work is about the intersection of sexism and consumerism, and we just thought that with the climate crisis here, its environmental message would resonate."

Similar in concept to the crowd-pleasing Unlimited sector in Art Basel in Switzerland, albeit smaller in scale, Meridians is being introduced one year after the fair phased out Art Basel Public. The free outdoor exhibition of large-scale sculpture had been held in Collins Park outside the Bass Museum since 2011. (This year, the park is home to the group show "Art Basel Cities: Buenos Aires.")

At Meridians, the 60,000-square-foot exhibition space is sprawling, but manageable, compared to the labyrinthine layout of the main show. Completed last year after three years of convention center renovations, the ballroom staged a performance art piece by Abraham Cruzvillegas during the 2018 fair.

Overall, the presentation is heavy on wall-based works. The historical offerings included Allan McCollum's *Constructed Paintings* (1971-73) from Petzel, New York, and Alexis Smith's *Fool's Gold* (1982)—not seen since 1990 retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York—from New York's Garth Greenan. New work also made the cut, including John M. Armleder's pour painting *Stetson* (2019), from Almine Rech, also in New York.

Sculptural works abound as well, such as Oscar Tuazon's *Quonset Tent* (2016) from Chantal Crousel, Paris. The architectural work was inspired by the efficient prefabricated Quonset huts made from corrugated galvanized steel and used for various purposes including temporary housing and military encampments. And Los Angeles's Anat Ebgi is restaging Tina Girouard's *Pinwheel* (1977), a performance only seen at the New Orleans Museum of Art. Each

of the work's four performers uses the objects in their quadrant of their installation to enact a ritual.

Another work that sold quickly was a suite of 365 drawings made during the year 2005 by José Antonio Suárez Londoño, snapped up for \$450,000 at Galleria Continua, of San Gimignano, Italy; Beijing; Havana; and Les Moulins, France.

But the sector's biggest showstopper just might be Tom Friedman's *Cocktail Party* (2015), which debuted in 2015 at Frieze London with Stephen Friedman, London. There, the artist's life-size sculptures filled the entire booth, to the point where you couldn't even step inside. At Basel, where the work is on offer for \$1.2 million, the Styrofoam men and women, clad in found clothing the artist has painted, all have space to breathe.

New York's Luhring Augustine is co-presenting the piece, and partner Lauren Whittels said the work made sense for the Meridians format. "There are 26 figures, and everybody has something about them that is distinctive," she told Artnet News. "I think this is going to get a lot of buzz."

See photos of the exhibition below.



Woody De Othello, *Cool Composition* (2019) from Sarah Silverman Gallery at Art Basel Miami Beach Meridians. Photo by Sarah Cascone.