Fair section spotlights influential work from the 20th century

Rosalyn Drexler’s ‘The Misfits’ (1961)

It’s back to the future at Art Basel Miami Beach, which presents for the second time a selection of art historical projects, courtesy of 14 galleries, in the Survey section. The fact that contemporary art did not emerge from a vacuum is reflected in the sector, whose focus is on works made pre-2000 (curators and dealers have welcomed the historical backdrop, which gives the Florida fair gravitas).

Noah Horowitz, Art Basel’s director of the Americas, says: “Art Basel in Miami Beach is known as the place to see the next new thing, but sections such as Survey are essential for slowing things
down. As some parts of art history are overlooked by the market, it is important to give them a platform here to be rediscovered and positioned anew.”

Pivotal works in a variety of media presented by the four galleries below prove that the art of the past still talks to the art of today.

**Rosalyn Drexler, Garth Greenan Gallery**

A chic, commanding figure in the mould of Marilyn Monroe runs towards the viewer, pursued by a mysterious male, in Rosalyn Drexler’s 1963 work “Marilyn Pursued by Death”. In “The Defenders”, a swath of sinister gangsters caught up in a shootout pre-empt *Reservoir Dogs* by nearly 30 years.

These crisp, captivating images by Drexler scream 1960s, the era when the now 89-year-old Bronx-born artist made waves with her bold, noirish collages. Five of her works, including “The Dream” (1963), are available with Garth Greenan Gallery of New York (prices are undisclosed, and “Marilyn Pursued by Death” is promised to the Whitney Museum of American Art).

“Drexler is certainly important because she was one of the first Pop artists, and also because she was a female Pop artist. Her work was derived from mediated images that she culled from popular media, collaged on to canvases and edited by painting,” says Sid Sachs, director of exhibitions at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

Drexler has lived many lives: she wrestled professionally, as Rosa Carlo, the Mexican Spitfire, and novelised the 1976 movie *Rocky* under the pseudonym Julia Sorel. The art historian Robert Cozzolino wrote earlier this year that she “has been discovered and rediscovered so many times that the art world should be checked for amnesia”.

Garth Greenan makes the boldest claim: “She is as good as Warhol and Lichtenstein.” Next February, she has yet another renaissance with a retrospective at the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University near Boston.

**Roy DeCarava, Jenkins Johnson Gallery**
Many art aficionados would draw a blank on Roy DeCarava (1919-2009), a trailblazing figure of 20th-century photography. But the San Francisco-based dealer Karen Jenkins-Johnson aims to rectify this with a presentation of 42 vintage prints by the life-long New Yorker at Art Basel Miami Beach (prices between $45,000 and $110,000).

DeCarava’s incisive, understated images of Manhattan street scenes and jazz icons such as John Coltrane, dating from the 1940s to the 1990s, will be an anomaly among the flashier, more conceptual works at the fair. “White Glove and Cigarette” (1962) depicts the poised elegance of a lady at leisure (he mastered the medium of silver gelatin, describing his practice as “an infinite palette of greys”).

Jenkins-Johnson argues that DeCarava’s work should not be categorised as photojournalism. “He took a different approach, and looked at photography more like a painter,” she says, adding “He was overlooked because of his race”. Nonetheless, in 1952 he was the first African-American photographer to receive a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship.

Leading US artist Carrie Mae Weems credits the late photographer with confounding conventions. “She saw in images by Roy DeCarava and other African-Americans the medium’s ability to rewrite black cultural myths and counter negative perceptions and stereotypes,” said the organisers of her show at the Guggenheim in New York last year. The late photographer’s wife, art historian Sherry Turner DeCarava, believes that his vision heralded a new “emotionally driven context for creative photography”.

Peter Campus, Cristin Tierney Gallery

Bill Viola, that titan of video art, doffed his cap to Peter Campus in a 2010 article, saying that in the 1970s his fellow film-maker “blazed a trail into the depths of the living moment few have followed”. Campus’s landmark, avant-garde work is at Cristin Tierney gallery, which is showing nine single-channel works created between 1971 and 1976.

“He dissects the nature and the notion of the self,” Tierney says. “In the 1970s, he kept turning the medium against itself and pushing it, rather like photography pioneers of the 19th century.”

Art history students should pop in just to see “Three Transitions” (1973), which employed cutting-edge visual and spatial effects. It shows Campus stabbing himself in the back, then climbing through the cut-out portion to appear whole on the other side (the trickery is achieved by recording with two cameras simultaneously).

In “Third Tape” (1976), Campus constructs a fragmented, misshapen image of himself in a series of
mirrored tiles (eyes and noses proliferate on screen). “He’s asking you to think about what you see — and don’t see,” Tierney says.

Video art is a tough sell but the $30,000 pricetag on all nine pieces might tempt some major institutions; single works are priced at $3,000 each, apart from “Three Transitions” which costs $6,000, and the works are available in “open editions” with no cap on the number available. “Many institutions think they own copies of some of the works, but they may well be bootleg versions,” Tierney warns.

**Miguel Angel Rojas, Espavisor Gallery**

Shady figures mill around the corridors of a rundown movie theatre, eyeing each other up. The setting is the faded Faenza theatre in Bogotá more than 30 years ago, as seen by the Colombian artist Miguel Angel Rojas.

The voyeurism of his grainy, peephole images, taken by a hidden camera, is startling. Mira Bernabéu of Espavisor Gallery in Valencia explains how Rojas uses photography to explore gay dynamics, especially against the backdrop of Colombia’s deeply conservative society. “His early works — 1970s and 1980s series entitled “Faenza”, “Mogador” and “Sobre Porcelana” — revealed what was relegated to the shadows; a subject until then not addressed in Colombian art.”

Among the feverish and unsettling works on display are his “David” series from 2005 ($28,000 each), showing a naked young man whose lower leg was blown off by a landmine. Other works range in price from $12,000 for the 1974 etching “Pelito” to $120,000 for the silver gelatin photographs “Paquita” (1979-2015; edition of three).

*Art Basel Miami Beach, December 3-6, artbasel.com/miami-beach*

**Miami Art Week: out and about in the city**

There’s more to Miami Art Week than Art Basel, with many other fairs in Miami Beach (or on the beach itself, in the case of Scope) as well as on the mainland. And for those who have had enough of the fairs, there is a host of excellent museum shows to see.

**Miami Beach**

**Scope**
801 Ocean Drive
December 1-6
scope-art.com

Scope’s focus is on emerging contemporary art from across the world. It graduates to a larger pavilion on the
beach front for its 15th edition this year.

**Nada**
The Fontainebleau Miami Beach
4441 Collins Ave
December 3-5
nadaartfair.org

The New Art Dealers Alliance is a not-for-profit organisation for new voices in contemporary art. Its art fair, Nada, was set up “to vigorously pursue our goals of exploring new or underexposed art”.

**Pulse**
Indian Beach Park, 4601 Collins Avenue
December 1-5
pulse-art.com

Founded in 2005, Pulse provides a platform for young and more established contemporary galleries.

**Fridge**
Holiday Inn Miami Beach
4333 Collins Avenue
December 3-6
fridgeartfair.com

Fridge Art Fair advertises its modest booth and entry fees in the hope of attracting a wider audience. Its founder, the artist Eric Ginsburg, specialises in dog and cat portraits, and visitors to the fair can have him paint their pet while they browse the stands.

**Art on Paper**
Deauville Beach Resort
6701 Collins Avenue
December 1-6
thepaperfair.com/miami

Art on Paper is just that — though visitors might be surprised to find a range of sculpture as well as two-dimensional work.

**Satellite**
Various venues
December 1-6
New this year, Satellite styles itself as an alternative to Miami Beach’s many art fairs. It comprises exhibitions, installations and performances: among the highlights are *Recycling Religion*, a group show of mostly eastern European artists including Pussy Riot, and an exhibition resembling a beachside gift shop with “artist interpretations on everything from sunscreen to beach towels to bongs”.

**Mainland Miami**

**Art Miami**
Midtown Miami, 3101 NE 1st Avenue
December 1-6
artmiamifair.com

The city’s most established modern and contemporary art fair is now in its 26th year. It takes place in Wynwood, the graffiti-clad neighbourhood home to some 70 galleries and museums, and attracts mid-level galleries rather than the big names seen at Art Basel. Its sister fair, Context Art Miami, launched in 2012 and is “dedicated to the development and reinforcement of emerging and mid-career artists”.

**Pinta**
Mana Wynwood,
318 NW 23rd Street
December 1-6
pintamiami.com

Also in Wynwood is Pinta, one of Miami’s most distinctive art fairs, focused specifically on Latin American art.

**Spectrum**
1700 NE 2nd Avenue
December 2-6
spectrum-miami.com

Spectrum, which features mostly US galleries, has moved to a new location in Miami’s arts and entertainment district between Midtown and Downtown.

**Museums**
A mid-career retrospective of the Jamaican artist Nari Ward, *Sun Splashed*, has just opened. Also running are *No Boundaries: Aboriginal Australian Contemporary Abstract Painting* and *Bloodlines*, Firelei Baez’s solo show inspired by histories of black resistance. There are also project galleries by Sheela Gowda, Jeff Wall, Nicolas Lobo and Bik Van der Pol.

**The Institute of Contemporary Art**
*icamiami.org*

Exhibitions at the ICA Miami include *Shannon Ebner: A Public Character* and *Alex Bag: The Van (Redux)*, which opens on December 1.

**NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale**
*nsuartmuseum.org*

The museum is showing a survey of Picasso’s painted ceramics and works on paper as well as an exhibition of William J Glackens’s paintings and *Revolution of the Eye: Modern Art and the Birth of American Television*.

*Photograph: Estate of Roy DeCarava*