

Art Basel Miami Beach's 'Survey': blasts from the past

by Gareth Harris November 27, 2015

Fair section spotlights influential work from the 20th century



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.