

# Fairly Curated



**BAM, 2015, in bronze,**  
by Sanford Biggers,  
at David Castillo Gallery  
of Miami Beach.

## Breaking Down Art Basel Miami Beach

by Taylor Dafoe

ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST SIGNIFICANT and well-attended art fairs, Art Basel Miami Beach (ABMB) is also a rather complicated affair—which is not surprising, given its scope and context. Aside from its sheer size—the 2015 edition drew 77,000 visitors—the structure, with myriad special sections, curators, and programs, can be hard to discern. In hopes of shedding light on the intricacies of the event, we've broken down the sectors that visitors can expect to see this year, and offer a close-up look at four examples of the fair's highly curated gallery booths that are featuring special projects.

Over the course of the fair's 15 years, nine different sectors have been introduced, each with a given purpose. Some, such as Galleries and Positions, have been part of the fair since its inception, reflecting similar initiatives at Art Basel in Switzerland. Others were launched in response to the ever-shifting market landscape. This year's offerings include Galleries, Nova, Positions, Kabinett, Survey, Edition, Public, Film, and Magazines. Of those, the first five are the results of serious curatorial research and effectively function as small exhibitions within the larger

fair. "We certainly see galleries and artists responding to these niche sectors, especially in using the parameters to their advantage to exhibit something that they might not be able to in another part of the show, or even at another fair," explains Art Basel director of the Americas Noah Horowitz. "In many ways, they've become alternative exhibition mechanisms in their own right."

Galleries, the biggest section of the fair, with 193 exhibitors—which occupies the entire main exhibition hall—would appear to lack any thematic organizational scheme. This is both a positive and a negative: For exhibitors thinking curatorially, it provides a great deal of freedom for experimentation, but it can make others look like carnival barkers hawking art. However, the layout is orchestrated to optimize the flow of traffic and the compatibility of the booths.

With the exception of Public and Kabinett, the other sectors are located off the main hall, allowing each to stand on its own—conceptually, as well as physically—within the layout of the convention center. "The structure is designed to provide opportunities for younger galleries, with a lower cost of entry for Nova and Positions," says Horowitz. "The goal is for these galleries to grow and eventually move into other areas of the fair, whether it be Galleries or another special sector."

Positions, an ABMB original, was initially held in converted shipping containers near the beach. Today it's in the exhibition hall along with everything else, though it remains committed to the fair's original mission to serve as a place where up-and-coming artists and dealers share a stage with the world's mega-galleries. Positions provides a platform for individual artists to present one major project. Participants this year include artist Maggie Lee reimagining the Brooklyn gallery Real Fine Arts's booth space as a teenage girl's bedroom, and a new series of works by Mike Cloud assembled from found items, bits of text, and images sourced from discarded DVD covers, at New York's Thomas Erben Gallery.

Nova, introduced in the fair's second edition in 2003, is similar, but more expansive. The sector allows younger galleries to present works by up to three artists—in effect a mini group show. Among this year's 35 exhibitors are Galleria Raffaella Cortese of Milan, presenting a multimedia installation by Joan Jonas; Berlin-based Tanya Leighton, exhibiting new work by Aleksandra Domanović and Oliver Larić; and New York's



**Blue Eye/Red Eye, a 2016  
oil and pastel on canvas  
by Becky Kolsrud, is at  
New York's JTT gallery.**

47 Canal, showing recent work by this year's Hugo Boss Prize winner, Anicka Yi, including a 3-D film shot in the Amazon rainforest.

Kabinett, a mini sector within Galleries, comprises demarcated sections within individual booths. The restrictions are only spatial, allowing galleries to curate the Kabinett area in whatever way they choose. Of note this year are Francis M. Naumann Fine Art from New York, showing a collection of drawings, paintings, photographs, and objects by Man Ray; Sperone Westwater, also from New York, featuring new sculptures by Tom Sachs; and Chicago dealer Kavi Gupta, presenting an interactive installation—in this case a candy store—by Serbian artist Irena Haiduk.

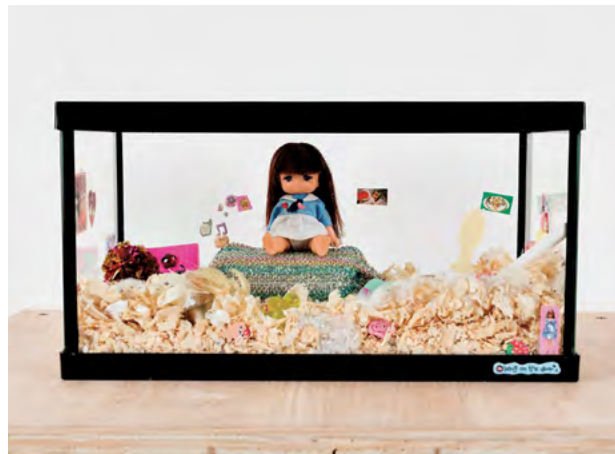
Now in its third year, Survey is limited to artwork created before the

DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY, MIAMI BEACH

BECKY KOLSRUD AND JTT, NEW YORK



From top: *Mysteries II*, 1964, by Romare Bearden, in photostat on fiberboard, at DC Moore Gallery of New York; detail of Maggie Lee's 2016 *Bang On The Door* installation at Real Fine Arts, also of New York; and Jacques Villeglé's *Quai des Célestins*, 1964, in mixed media, at Galerie GP&N Vallois of Paris.



21st century, offering exhibitors an opportunity to show historically significant or forgotten work by one artist each. Four of the 14 galleries in Survey are new this year. Exhibitions include rare photographic works by Romare Bearden—an artist more widely known for his paintings, cartoons, and collages—at DC Moore Gallery of New York; a 1973 altarlike assemblage by Betye Saar, *Mti*, which invites onlookers to leave personal objects at its base at Roberts & Tilton of Culver City, California; and a collection of early and rarely seen abstractions by David Reed at New York's Peter Blum Gallery. Also included in Survey are artists Carmelo Arden Quin, Graciela Carnevale, Ibrahim El-Salahi, Margaret Kilgallen, Giorgio Morandi, Howardena Pindell, George Rickey, Mimmo Rotella, Barbara T. Smith, Kishio Suga, and Jacques Villeglé.

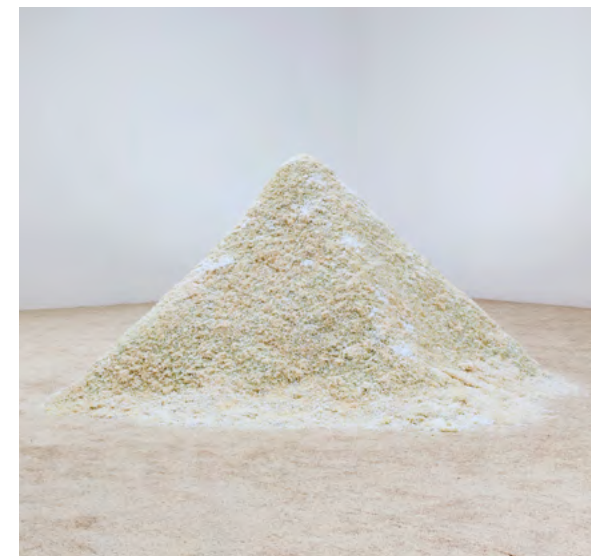
The Public and Film sectors each have their own curators. The former, organized by Nicholas Baume and produced in collaboration with Miami Beach's Bass Museum of Art (which is itself in the midst of renovation), features 20 large-scale sculptures and installations by artists from all over the world, on view in Collins Park. This year's Film offerings, meanwhile, under the curatorship of David Gryn and Marian Masone, are built around music and feature pieces by Christian Marclay, Liliana Porter, Alfredo Jaar, Anri Sala, Haroon Mirza, Samson Young, and Ana Mendieta, among others. Making its debut is Maura Axelrod's recent film, *Maurizio Cattelan: Be Right Back*, which details the career of the art world prankster. Finally, the Edition and Magazines sectors offer multiples and printed materials for those not quite ready to take the blue-chip plunge.

The structures of the sectors may be simple, but are they restrictive? "Any exhibition is restricted in some way," says Miami dealer David Castillo. "The idea of an art fair having curated sectors is not any more restrictive than any other exhibition format in the world. There are always limitations. We just don't think about them as much in other contexts."

"We find that providing guidelines for these sectors helps galleries to curate their booths with a specific focus in mind, and leads to more thoughtful and high-quality presentations," says Horowitz. "We also see more interactive and performative works in these sectors, as well as large-scale installations that take over the whole booth."



Right: A 2016 *Untitled* assemblage of fake flowers behind Plexiglas, installed in a gallery wall by Amy Yao, who will create a similar work within the Various Small Fires booth. Below: *Doppelgängers II*, another piece by Yao from 2016, made of rice, PVC rice, and other materials.



**VARIOUS SMALL FIRES • Los Angeles • Amy Yao**

This four-year-old boutique enterprise makes its Art Basel debut this month. For gallery founder Esther Kim Varet, the idea was to wait for a time in the gallery's development when it could "contribute something substantial to the ABMB program." The opportunity came in the form of Amy Yao's ambitious installations, which are on display in the gallery's booth in the Positions sector. "We felt her work would thrive in a section that makes the audience feel comfortable taking their time familiarizing themselves with the artworks," says Varet. The project is an extension of Yao's early 2016 show at the gallery, titled "Bay of Smokes," which explored the environmental effects of modern-day international trade. "This was a show in which the objects and ideas had to somehow travel and continue to spread their influence," says Varet. Among the pieces in the exhibition is *Doppelgängers*, a large pile of real and plastic rice, made in reference to a 2015 scandal in China in which rice makers mixed plastic rice with the real product to increase profit margins, which resulted in hundreds of sick consumers. Also on view are Yao's site-specific fake flower works, for which she cuts squares into the walls and installs plastic flower beds. "The booth was developed in a collaboration between Amy and the gallery, but the nature of the work and conceptual background are very much Amy's," explains Varet.

FROM TOP: DC MOORE GALLERY, NEW YORK; REAL FINE ARTS, NEW YORK; GALERIE GP&N VALLOIS, PARIS

BOTH IMAGES: VARIOUS SMALL FIRES, LOS ANGELES



**DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY • Miami Beach**  
Sanford Biggers & Xaviera Simmons

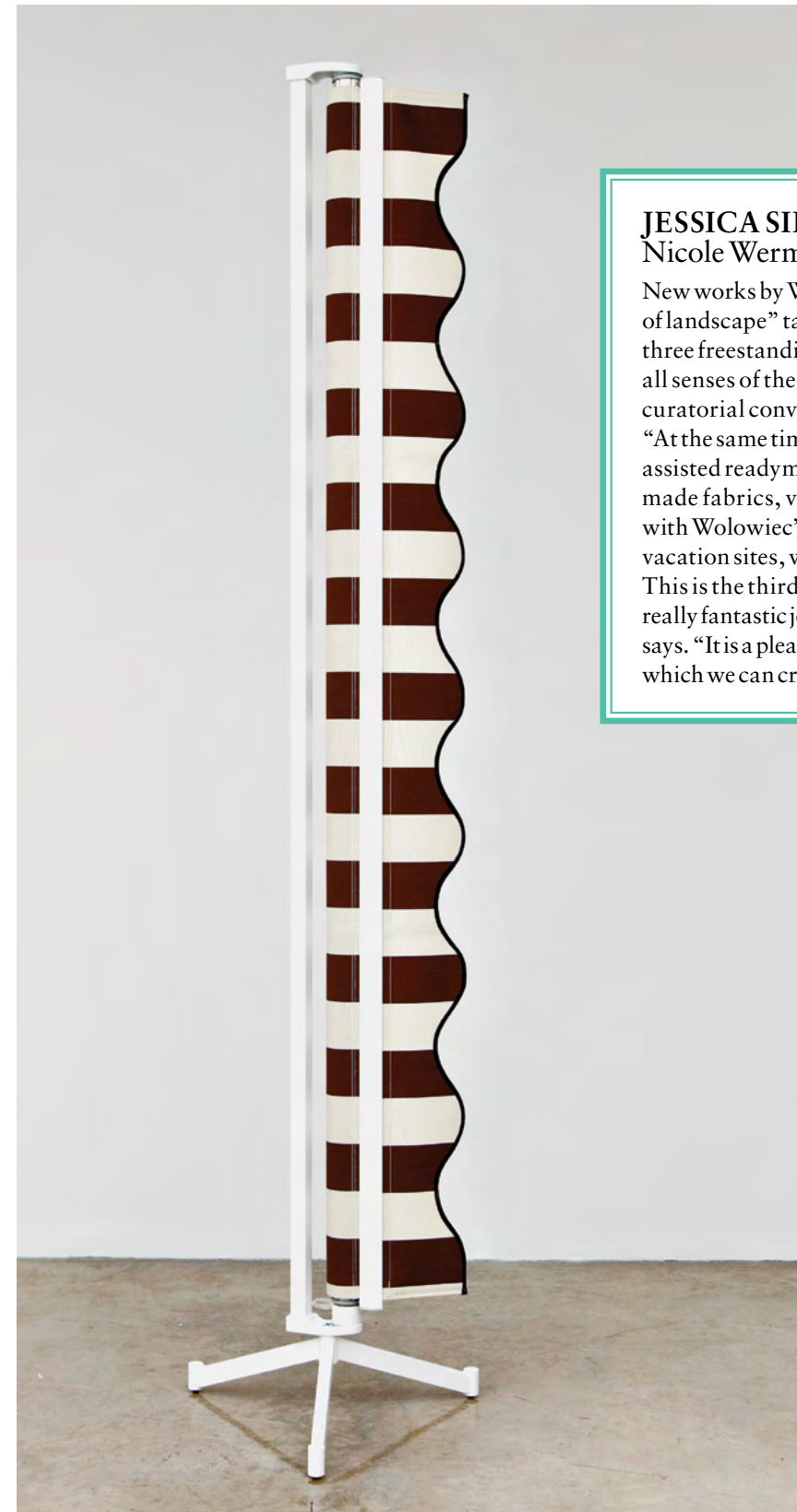
“Doing a curated sector at Art Basel is very appealing because that is what I prefer to do all the time. I’ve never done a booth where the works don’t dialogue in some way,” says David Castillo, whose eponymous gallery is located just one block away from ABMB, offering the dealer something of a home-field advantage. “It’s incredible because the gallery is so close,” he says, noting that an exhibition curated by Mickalene Thomas, titled “tête-à-tête,” opens at the gallery just before the fair kicks off. “We’re able to create a kind of synergy between the two.” This is Castillo’s third Art Basel presentation, and the second year in a row his space is participating in the Nova sector. This year’s outing offers new works by Sanford Biggers and Xaviera Simmons, two artists who shared space at the gallery last December. “They didn’t collaborate—the shows were separate—but people loved comparing the two,” says Castillo. “Visually their work goes well together, even though they’re working with very different narratives.” Both are experimenting with textiles for the first time, though it wasn’t planned that way. Biggers is showing a set of “quilt paintings” alongside a bronze sculpture, while Simmons is presenting several photographic works, including an installation of 24 images referencing an earlier body of work titled “The Gold Miner’s Mission to Dwell on the Tide Line,” currently on view at MOMA in New York. The booth is designed by Biggers.

From top: *Matter*, 2014, by Biggers, and *On The Tidal Line*, 2013, by Xaviera Simmons. Both are mixed-media works.



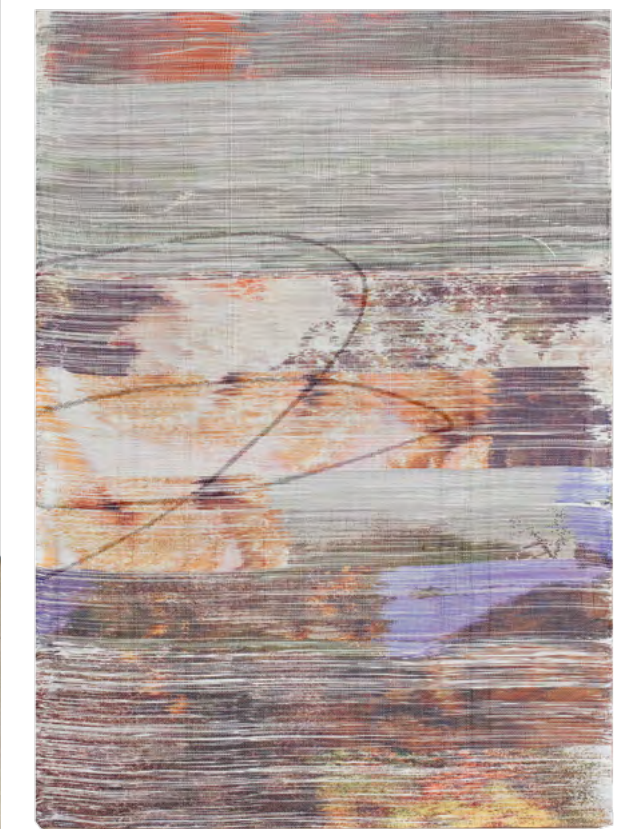
BOTH IMAGES: DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY

FROM LEFT: NICOLE WERMERS AND TANYA BONAKDAR GALLERY, NEW YORK; MARGO WOLOWIEC AND JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO

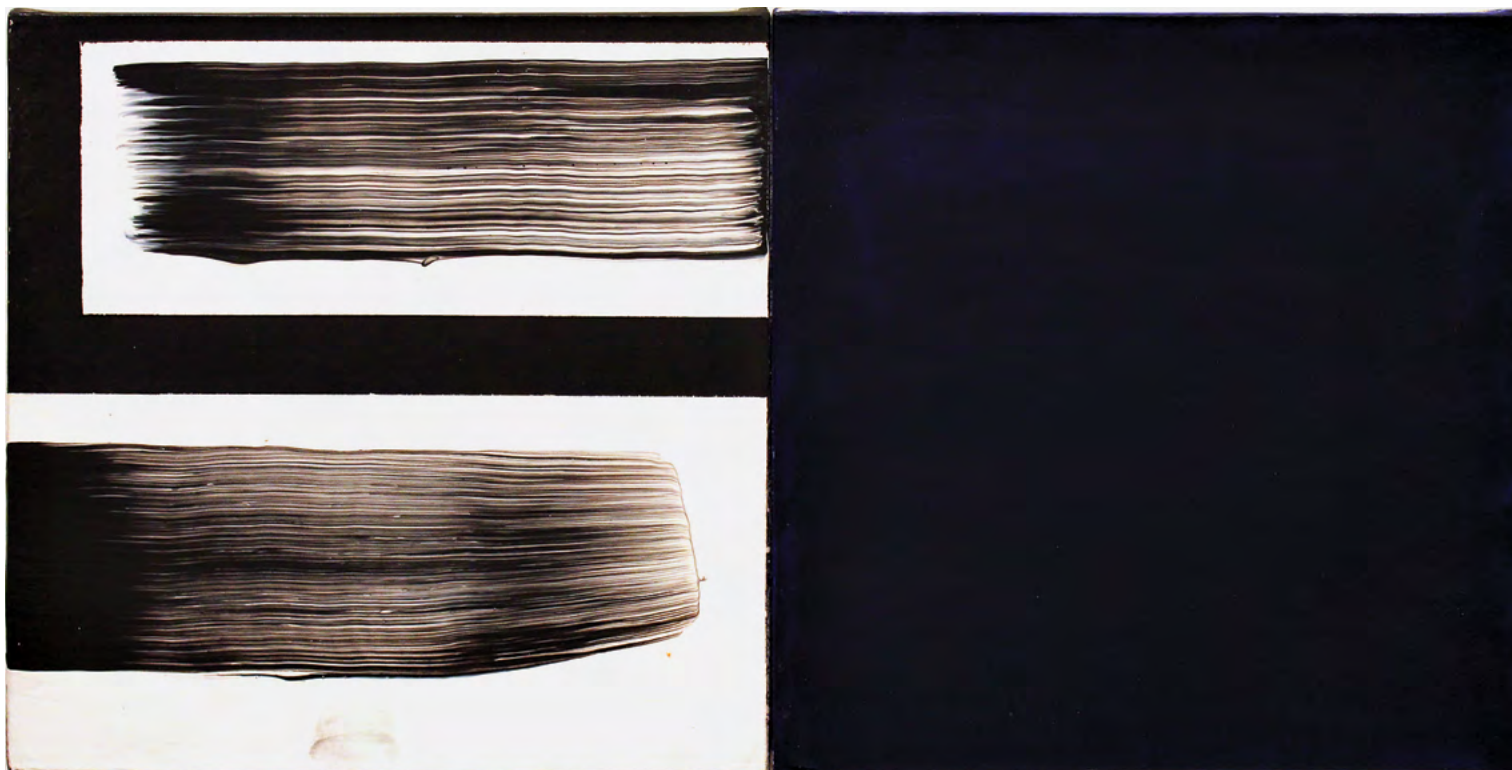


**JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY • San Francisco**  
Nicole Wermers & Margo Wolowiec

New works by Wermers and Wolowiec that confront the “long-standing art historical issue of landscape” take center stage in Silverman’s booth, which features three wall pieces and three freestanding sculptures by the artists—works that are “perpendicular to each other in all senses of the word,” explains Silverman. The gallery’s booth came about as a result of curatorial conversations: “I had been speaking to both artists about landscape,” she says. “At the same time, Wermers had begun making her ‘Vertical Awnings,’ which are basically assisted readymades, containing elements of actual awnings, but redesigned with custom-made fabrics, valances, and stands. Alongside these sculptures I could see a dialogue with Wolowiec’s new ‘Geo Weavings,’ where she uses images of the landscape from various vacation sites, which are gathered using algorithms triggered by geotags and hashtags.” This is the third time the gallery has taken part in Nova. “The committee for ABMB does a really fantastic job of inviting galleries who propose very strong curatorial visions,” Silverman says. “It is a pleasure to be part of such a thoughtful section and to think through the ways in which we can create dialogue between artists in our program.”

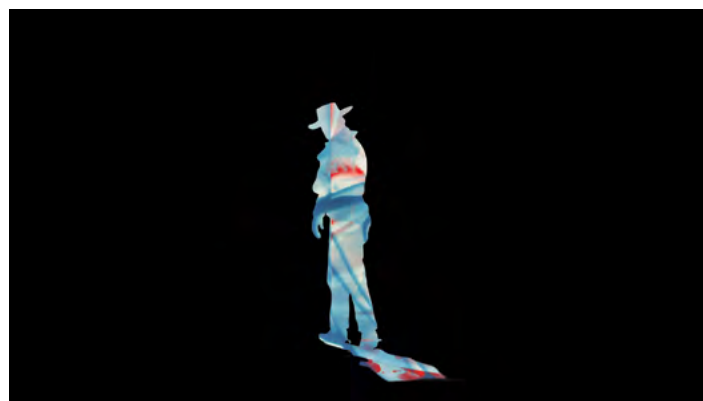


From left: *Vertical Awning (stripes brown/cream)*, in powder-coated steel and awning fabric, by Nicole Wermers, and *Floodwater II*, a mixed media on handwoven polyester and linen, by Margo Wolowiec (both works 2016).



## PETER BLUM GALLERY • *New York* David Reed

“The vision we had for our display made the most sense in the Survey section,” says New York gallerist Blum of his decision to showcase works by abstract painter Reed in the gallery’s inaugural outing within a curated sector. “The curated sectors allow an artist to be able to express a complete and coherent thought within the art fair context. These sectors distinguish themselves from the rest of the fair—a place where one can spend time with the works with less distraction,” he explains. “We had an exhibition of new paintings by Reed earlier this year that was a big success both critically and within the trajectory of his work.” The gallery’s display, which features a suite of rarely seen gestural paintings and works on paper from the early 1970s, as well as a short video Reed made based on the iconic 1956 John Ford film *The Searchers*, coincides with an exhibition of Reed’s work at the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), which opened November 29. The ABMB Survey booth, in conjunction with the PAMM show, “provides visitors a unique opportunity to see how the artist’s early works influenced what he is making today,” says Blum. ☐



From top: David Reed’s 1978 *Study 10*, in acrylic on canvas; and a still from Reed’s 2007 video *The Searchers*, with figures appropriated from John Ford’s 1956 film of the same name.

BOTH IMAGES: DAVID REED AND PETER BLUM GALLERY, NEW YORK