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60,000 square feet with 33 monumental works equals one really big new sector at Art Basel

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An untitled 1980 painting by Sam Francis measuring almost 21 feet wide will be presented by Galerie Thomas at Art Basel Miami Beach in 2019.

If you think you've finally figured out the Art Basel layout, you've got more exploring to do.

This year, Art Basel in Miami Beach introduces its new sector, Meridians, dedicated to large-scale installations (those things that can only fit in a museum or art warehouse).

On Thursday, the fair announced the selection of 34 projects — all that would fit in the 60,000-square-foot Grand Ballroom atop the Miami Beach Convention Center. (Actually, only 33 fit

inside. An installation by Jose Davila will be staged outdoors on the convention center's north side.)

“The galleries and artists have responded extremely strongly,” said Noah Horowitz, director for the Americas for Art Basel. “These are the kinds of works that a gallery can show in a museum or biennial, but until now wouldn't have been able to show at a U.S. fair.”

Installations range from the historical to new works by emerging artists. All are too large for a conventional fair booth. The largest: a nine-screen video by Isaac Julien in a 2,000-square-foot space.

“We want to raise the bar and give our galleries and their artists more reasons to engage and invest in the fair. We also want to give wider and deeper offerings for collectors,” said Horowitz.

Buyers for such works tend to be museums and institutions, said Horowitz, not only because of the size involved, but also the complex logistics involved with installation and preservation.

Along with works by international stars Sam Francis, Laure Prouvost, Fred Wilson and Theaster Gates, curator Magali Arriola has put an emphasis on artists and works from the Americas.

All galleries in Meridians must be admitted to Art Basel through its regular selection process, though a gallery may bring on an outside partner. Each presenting gallery in Meridians pays a flat fee of \$20,000.

Several of the installations have strong local ties.

- Miami-born artist Woody De Othello reflects his fascination with the Vodou vessels of his Haitian heritage and everyday objects that overcome negative energy. For Florida residents, the living room fan is an essential tool for overcoming heat — including the heat caused by climate change. Jessica Silverman's San Francisco gallery presents his “Cool Composition,” featuring a giant bronze fan, ceramic stools and full-grown citrus tree.

- Miamians are likely familiar with the late Cuban-American artist Ana Medienta, a Pedro Panner whose work often addressed displacement, feminism and violence. Galerie Lelong & Co. and Alison Jacques Gallery partner to present one of her early works, a 1981 film of one of her signature earthworks created on the beach of Guanabo, Cuba.

▪ Miami Beach gallerist David Castillo, who will showcase gallery artists in his booth in the Galleries section, will bring an expansion of “Deconstruction,” an installation by Miami-based artist Pepe Mar first shown at the Frost-FIU museum. The original, an homage to the late drag queen Varla (aka artist Craig Coleman), measured 18 feet; the Art Basel rendition is more than twice that size and incorporates Mar’s collage practice with two paintings by Varla. The installation fits into an ongoing series by Mar exploring queer history of major cities, including Miami.

“It means a great deal that the project was chosen by such a high-profile curator,” said Castillo, referring to Arriola, who is director of the Museo Tamayo in Mexico City. “It’s very important for the gallery and the artist.”

The [2019 Art Basel Miami Beach](#) fair opens to the public Dec. 5 and runs through Dec. 8.



White Cube gallery will present a 35-minute video by Theaster Gates in the 2019 Meridians sector of Art Basel Miami Beach.