ALMINE RECH

Fire Figure Fantasy: Selections from ICA Miami's Collection

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"Fire Figure Fantasy" is ICA Miami's first major exhibition to showcase its permanent collection, with a focus on recent acquisitions. Since its founding in 2014, ICA Miami has established itself as a singular voice in artistic stewardship and research with a collection that champions leading emerging and established artists. Local and national voices are represented in dialogue with some of the most experimental global practices, further enriched by the dynamic context of Miami. Cultivating substantive dialogue between newly commissioned works and works from the last fifty years, the collection is a living testament to the museum's mission to advance the exchange of art and ideas.

Spanning nearly the entirety of the museum's exhibition space, "Fire Figure Fantasy" revolves around important focal points of ICA Miami's collection: social justice, newly emerging technologies, and recent global crises that challenge and reconfigure museum institutions themselves. The exhibition opens with this last theme, bringing together a group of artists interested in engaging, interpreting, and rewriting institutional histories by shifting and diversifying entrenched art historical precedents. An entry point is Henry Taylor's large-scale painting *The Last Supper* (2018), which examines race and labor, employing the conventions of history painting, while in *Label QualiParis* (2020), Esteban Jefferson considers the flawed and fictitious foundation of the Western canon. Throughout the exhibition, artists working in a wide range of mediums, including McArthur Binion, Lauren Halsey, Rashid Johnson, Cameron Rowland, and Sable Elyse Smith, draw on the strategies of conceptual art to critically explore structures that perpetuate injustice on a systemic level.

Perhaps the most heralded preoccupation of artists in the past decade has been portraiture and the figure, which is represented extensively in various modes in the exhibition. A diverse selection of artists draw out themes of identity, community, and technology through explorations of the body, materiality, and form. Andra Ursuța's monumental Soft Power 2 (2013) links the body to protest and gender, while Louise Bonnet, Ewa Juszkiewicz, and Christina Quarles thoughtfully and critically challenge preconceptions of the female body. Elle Pérez presents multifaceted perspectives on the body that are shaped by personal experiences, popular culture, and theoretical discourses. Dominic Chambers, Jonathan Lyndon Chase, Cheyenne Julien, Florian Krewer, and Doron Langberg among many others, create spaces of intimacy and resistance in their works.

In times of isolation, instability, and uncertainty artists often provide glimpses into illusory and transcendental worlds. Many of the works in "Fire Figure Fantasy" direct us toward new, alternative horizons. The work of Toyin Ojih Odutola narrates an equitable space through the means of imaginative science fiction, while the large-scale paintings of Avery Singer imagine complicated futures. Idyllic landscapes confront complex realities in the works of Lucas Arruda, Kyle Dunn, Emma Webster, and Huang Yuxing, sublime works subtly evoke the urgency of the continued environmental crisis.

Reflecting ICA Miami's active and prolific commissioning program, the exhibition features a number of new works commissioned by the museum that will be on view for the first time. Additionally, works by Guadalupe Maravilla and Vaughn Spann contend with some of the most pressing issues of our time. Works by Hernan Bas, Tomm El-Saieh, Amani Lewis, and Jared McGriff, among others, reflect the artistic production of Miami artists that the museum has long championed.

“Fire Figure Fantasy” is organized by ICA Miami and curated by Alex Gartenfeld, Artistic Director; Gean Moreno, Director, Knight Foundation Art + Research Center; Stephanie Seidel, Curator; and Amanda Morgan, Assistant Curator, Exhibitions and Publications. The exhibition is accompanied by ICA Miami’s first publication on the permanent collection. It features over one hundred texts authored by featured artists, as well as roundtable discussions with a selection of artists working in the Asian diaspora; and another with leading Miami-based artists.