

HYPERALLERGIC

Rosalyn Drexler's Knockout Pop Paintings Shine at Art Basel Miami Beach

by Allison Meier December 3, 2015

MIAMI BEACH — Artist Rosalyn Drexler was once immortalized in silkscreen by Andy Warhol as her wrestling persona “Rosa Carlo, the Mexican Spitfire,” yet Drexler’s own powerful Pop art has never received as much acclaim as Warhol’s work and others of her generation. This week’s edition of Art Basel Miami Beach features a punchy five-painting show that continues to make the argument for her place in the cannon of 1960s Pop.

As part of Art Basel’s Survey sector, which focuses on historical art, the New York–based Garth Greenan Gallery is exhibiting Drexler’s work. All of the pieces on view by the Bronx-born artist come from the 1960s, mixing collage with acrylic paint and featuring references to film, celebrity, and pop culture. In “Marilyn Pursued by Death” (1936), the late starlet walks through a canvas of black with a mysterious man in pursuit, while Rosalyn Drexler’s “The Defenders” (1963), with its chaotic shoot-out scene, could be a poster for an Italian film noir.



The Dream, 1963

Earlier this year Garth Greenan Gallery staged *Rosalyn Drexler: Vulgar Lives* in New York, concentrating on her work from the 1960s to '80s. In the Weekend edition of Hyperallergic, John Yau wrote that in “her paintings from the 1960s, Drexler’s coloring book aesthetics led her to apply areas of flat color, which evoked the paintings of Barnett Newman as well as the film posters of Saul Bass.” There is this remixing of popular aesthetics, with a dash of her own Pop perspective, which isolates figures in these vast color planes to consider their uncertain fates when detached from their familiar narratives. For example, in “The Dream” (1963), King Kong pours magazine clippings from his raised fist, the prone woman below caught in either agony or ecstasy as the bits of severed information rain on her head.

According to the *Financial Times*, “Marilyn Pursued by Death” is heading to the Whitney Museum of American Art, although the other pieces are in limbo, which makes the Garth Greenan booth an essential one to seek out before the art disperses to collectors. Drexler has had an incredibly varied career, from novelist to Emmy awardee for television screenwriting. The paintings demonstrate her dexterity with both visuals and narrative, each frame its own animated story of color and form.