



Tug of War (2007-2010),
by Pascale Marthine
Tayou from Galleria
Continua.



Studio Seat I (2011),
by Thomas Houseago
from Gagolian Gallery.



Nicholas Baume

Social Studies

Renowned curator Nicholas Baume brings together a host of eclectic artists to exhibit at Public during Art Basel. *By Carol Kino*

One of the most civic-minded aspects of Art Basel in Miami Beach has always been its Public sector, which, since the first edition, has placed art throughout Miami, the better to engage with passersby. In contrast to the main show, where one buys a ticket, or the parties and private dinners, where you're allowed in only if you're on the right list, Public has always been exactly what its name implies: open to the public at any time of the day or night, welcoming even those who barely realize the fair is in town.

The project, which this year has been rechristened simply "Public," has become an increasingly prominent part of Art Basel, too. Since 2011, it has been co-organized in partnership with the Bass Museum of Art and held in Collins Park, filling the grassy expanse

that runs from the museum's doors to the sea with live performances on opening night, as well as video and sculpture. Last year, for the first time, portions of the exhibition remained open until the end of February 2013 as part of the Bass "tc: temporary contemporary" program, serving as an ongoing educational resource for community and student groups, and making it the longest-running part of the show.

This year, newly under the leadership of Nicholas Baume, the director and chief curator of New York's Public Art Fund, the Public sector promises to be even richer than before, offering visitors the chance to experience a greatly expanded number of artists and artworks, and keeping many of them on view through March. Called "Social Animals," the exhibition will feature 24 artists, including Aaron Curry, Tony Tasset,

Carol Bove, and Richard Long. Several are exhibiting more than one piece, and more than half are showing brand-new work, including Ursula von Rydingsvard, Alicja Kwade, and Oscar Tuazon.

In conceiving the exhibition, Baume took inspiration from Aristotle's observation that human beings are social animals by nature, he says. "A public park is by its nature social," he adds, as is an art fair, "with people coming from all over the world to follow their passion." His aim is for the art itself to be social, too. Made by artists of different generations whose aesthetics are highly variegated, Baume intends the disparate works to "meet and engage with one another," he says. "I really wanted to activate the park and make it feel lively and inviting."

Much of the work is figurative, like Huma Bhabha's (Salon 94) totemic figure made from patinated bronze or Tom Friedman's (Luhring Augustine/Stephen Friedman) *Huddle*, a group of three-foot-high stainless steel people crouched in a circle. (Baume calls it "this little mysterious congress happening in the park.") The Swiss-born artist Olaf Breuning (Metro Pictures) has contributed three new sculptures that render his faux-naïf

Tom Friedman's *Untitled* from the Lühring Augustine/Stephen Friedman Gallery.



“[Public] is very democratic.”
—SILVIA KARMAN CUBIÑÁ

drawings in brightly painted steel; one presents a stick figure whose head is filled with the word DREAMS.

Silvia Karman Cubiñá, the executive director and chief curator of the Bass, says she finds it fascinating to see so many different types of figuration in a city park, which itself is filled with so many different sorts of people. “The project is very democratic,” she says. “You have people who are not museumgoers—skaters, cyclists, and people with their children who just happen upon it. It makes for really interesting encounters.”

Interesting encounters will run throughout the show, which also contains a lot of abstract work, like Mark di Suvero's (Paula Cooper Gallery) *Exemplar*, a 1979 piece made from two intersecting I-beams; or *Blue Angel II*, a new piece by Michelle Lopez (Simon Preston Gallery), a sculptor about half his age. A huge rectangular aluminum form, Lopez's piece has been bent, crumpled, and manipulated to suggest the riveted fuselage of an airplane wing; it is also her largest and most ambitious work to date. “I'm keen to see

how some of the cross-generational resonances will play out,” offers Baume.

There are other crosscurrents at work here, too. While some pieces seem to riff on the lush natural surroundings of the park, like Mungo Thomson's new sound piece, which involves a clarinetist imitating a cricket, others suggest the antithesis of nature, like a bronze installation by the Belgian sculptor Maarten Vanden Eynde (Meessen De Clercq), which replicates a field of gushing oil wells.

Then there's Matias Faldbakken's piece, inspired by Steven Spielberg's first film, *Duel* (1971), about a showdown between a menacing truck and a milquetoast motorist. The Norwegian artist tracked down the last surviving 281 Peterbilt big rig used in the film and has now installed it in the park as a sculpture. “Spielberg chose the truck quite specifically for its menacing facial look and its sinister body,” Baume says. “Now Faldbakken is bringing this form into the ‘Social Animals’ context.”

Certainly, if anyone could meld together these disparate aesthetics in a way that's surprising and enriching for the art world and the general public alike, Baume seems the perfect person to do it. Since arriving at New York's Public Art Fund in September 2009, he has organized projects that take advantage of the city's unique geography and architecture, putting the first career overview of Sol LeWitt's sculptures into City Hall Park in 2011 and allowing visitors to explore Gaetano Russo's 1892 statue of Christopher Columbus close up in Tatzu Nishi's *Discovering Columbus* (2012), a project that put a comfortable living room around the top of the 75-foot-tall landmark.

In fact, Baume has been deeply engaged with public art since childhood. He grew up in Sydney next door to John Kaldor, one of Australia's most important art collectors, whose Kaldor Public Art Projects, launched with Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Wrapped Coast* in 1969, “single-handedly engaged Australia with the international contemporary art world,” Baume remembers. Kaldor also brought Gilbert & George's *The Singing Sculpture* to Australia in 1973 and helped show Sol LeWitt's wall drawings there in 1977.

Baume grew up seeing these projects and “helping wherever possible,” Kaldor says, even as a child. After university, he went to work for Kaldor before joining the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in Sydney in 1993. There, they collaborated on the realization of Koons's *Puppy* in 1995 and a brilliantly colored Sol LeWitt wall drawing in 1998. “What I admire about Nicholas,” Kaldor adds, “is that he is not only interested in the very contemporary, but he is also interested in the history of modern art. He has the ambition to show really outstanding work.”

Baume came to America in 1998, as the

contemporary curator of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut, where he founded what he says was the country's first dedicated contemporary space within an encyclopedic museum. In 2003, Baume became chief curator at the Boston ICA, just as the museum was expanding, and establishing its first permanent collection. There, he gave major shows to artists like Anish Kapoor, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Kai Altoff.

Another artist Baume showed at the ICA was the New York public sculptor Carol Bove (David Zwirner), who remembers her first American museum show fondly. “He showed me how to do it,” she says. “I feel grateful for that.” When Baume suggested that she contribute work to “Social Animals”—one of the five elements in *Flora's Garden*, Bove's 2012 installation at Documenta 13—she leapt at the idea.

The piece—an enormous chunk of petrified wood attached to a steel I-beam, as if to suggest a totem or a mask—is likely to take on a new feeling in Collins Park, Bove says, in relation to the living wood around it. “Nicholas had a vision of what he wanted, and I loved his idea,” she says. “He's very sensitive, and he's extremely cultured. He's also really respectful and gives artists a lot of space.”

That's pretty much how Baume feels about working with Art Basel in Miami Beach. “The team is very keen to try new ways of doing things,” he says. “That's essential for contemporary art, which itself is always evolving.” *Public runs from Thursday, December 5 through Sunday, December 8, with opening night Wednesday, December 4 open and free to the public.* **ABMB**

In the David Zwirner Gallery, *Flora's Garden* (2012), by Carol Bove.

