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Two Planets: Manet's Luncheon on the Grass and the Thai Villagers, by Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, 2011.



Reinventing Its Roots

The Bass Museum of Art connects its heritage to the contemporary art boom with a groundbreaking exhibit.

By Rebecca Kleinman

The Bass Museum of Art welcomes a good challenge. In the context of offering its Renaissance and Baroque collections to a new generation, the Miami Beach institution explores how art from all movements is related within the continuum of history with this year's exhibition during Art Basel in Miami Beach: "The Endless Renaissance—Six Solo Artist Projects." Though the works share a common thematic denominator, they're divided into six solo shows versus a single, curated group show as in years past.

"I'm proudest of the artists' diversity in age, gender, and geography," says executive director and chief curator Silvia Karman Cubiñá, who scored a coup by bringing artists who have never shown in Miami, such as Thai photographer and videographer Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook. It's always exciting for a museum to tap into a rising artist who's still new even to avid artgoers."

It's definitely Rasdjarmrearnsook's breakthrough year in America. Following her first US solo gallery and museum shows in New York and Baltimore, respectively, she will present works from "Two Planets," a series in which Thai villagers discuss European painting. Besides linking to the Bass's mission, it explores and consequently questions conventional Western habits of viewing art.

Each of the artists directly or abstractly references the history of art in his or her work. New York-based Barry X Ball represents the former through pieces clearly based on iconic masterpieces and artists.

"I guess my claim to fame is that I'm the contemporary artist most engaged with pre-20th-century art," says Ball, who scans 3-D images of European sculptures and then re-creates them in Mexican onyx, Belgian marble, and translucent calcite. Each piece is finished with approximately 5,000 hours of careful handwork, from carving to polishing. "It was remarkable that the Bass's mission matched my own. Not

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many Florida museums have a mummy."

Considering that he creates fewer than six works annually and has never even had one available for his gallerists to bring to the fair, the Bass exhibition of 10 sculptures (including four works that have never been presented to the public and one brand-new piece) is a monumental presentation of his output in a single venue. They weigh from 20 pounds for portrait heads, such as the two-sided depictions of Ball's and artist Matthew Barney's faces, to 2 tons, like *Sleeping*

Hermaphrodite, inspired by the Louvre's original.

"The theme is duality, whether [in] the split portraits or the opposing personalities of *Envy/Purity*," a two-piece sculpture depicting the famed allegorical Baroque figure in *Veiled Woman*, who was chaste, and in *Envy*, a screaming crone with a head of snakes.

Cornwall, England-based Ged Quinn is also making his Florida debut with eight oil paintings that revisit classical landscapes by the likes of Claude Lorrain and Jacob van Ruisdael, dating from the 17th to the 19th centuries. He reinvents these masterworks through scale and by making references to contemporary politics, social issues, as well as cultural associations and symbols.

"I'm drawn to [the potential of] these old works because most people consider them finished conversations, just old objects hanging in museums," Quinn says.

Also featured are Eija-Liisa Ahtila, a video artist and photographer in Helsinki, Finland; Walead Beshty, a Los Angeles artist whose fragile copper panels and glass sculptures for the show discuss art's provenance; and Düsseldorf, Germany-based Hans-Peter Feldmann, who collects and reorganizes amateur photos, toys, and other trivial items.

The exhibit opens with a VIP reception on December 5, 2012, and runs through March 17, 2013, at 2100 Collins Ave., 305-673-7530; bassmuseum.org ABMB

Dual-Dual portrait sculpture ensemble, by Barry X Ball and Matthew Barney, 2000-2009.

