

Art in America

PREVIEWS MAY 14, 2015

Framing Frieze New York with Gary Carrion-Murayari

by Wendy Vogel

Just a few days after returning from the Venice Biennale, New Museum curator Gary Carrion-Murayari was back on a boat. This time, however, he traded the Italian city's famous canals for New York's East River. We met at the 35th Street ferry dock in Manhattan on a sunny afternoon to travel to the VIP preview of [Frieze New York](#) (through May 17) on Randall's Island. The fourth iteration of the art fair includes more than 190 contemporary art galleries from around the world.

"The schedule is a bit rough this year," Carrion-Murayari admitted, referring to the back-to-back art events on two continents. But the curator, who is co-organizing [a solo exhibition of the German artist Albert Oehlen's work opening June 10](#), showed no signs of exhaustion. As we boarded the ferry, he talked about the upcoming show.

"Oehlen is an important artist to look at now," he said, explaining that his "complicated relationship with abstraction and figuration" has influenced a younger

Pía Camil: *Pía for sale*, 2010; at Instituto de Visión, Bogotá.



generation of painters, including Wade Guyton, Josh Smith, and many of the artists featured in the recent MoMA exhibition ["The Forever Now."](#) Oehlen relentlessly experiments with style, as did his former teacher, Sigmar Polke. "He's not about becoming comfortable," Carrion-Murayari said. He added that the [Los Angeles-based artist Jim Shaw, whose solo show he is curating this fall](#), shares this drive to constantly change course.

Carrion-Murayari describes his approach to visiting fairs as "impressionistic"; rather than actively scouting new work, he uses the opportunity to refresh his memory about artists and galleries. Our first stop was at [James Fuentes's booth](#) near the fair's north entrance. The Lower East Side gallerist is showing a series of sculptures, both mixed-media assemblages and welded metal compositions, made since 1994 by Lonnie Holley. A 65-year-old "outsider" artist and musician born in Alabama, Holley recently received attention in the traveling group exhibition about the American South titled ["When the Stars Begin to Fall."](#) Organized by the former Studio Museum in Harlem assistant curator Thomas J. Lax (now associate curator of media and performance at MoMA), the exhibition closed earlier this week at its third and final venue, the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston.

ICA Boston's new senior curator Dan Byers greeted Carrion-Murayari seconds later in the booth of Los Angeles's [David Kordansky](#). There they admired a set of bright abstract paintings by Lesley Vance, an artist included in the [2010 Whitney Biennial](#) that Carrion-Murayari organized with Francesco Bonami.

A work by Anna K.E. at the booth of New York's [Simone Subal](#) caught Carrion-Murayari's eye next.

In a 2015 video embedded in an installation that includes sculpture, film, photography and drawing, the artist (born in Tbilisi, Georgia, but now residing in the U.S. and Germany) uses her upper body to pull herself across the floor on a rolling chair. "This piece is called *Post Hunger Generation II*," Subal explained. "Her work is a meditation on urgency, with references to her own body."

Carrion-Murayari then proceeded to the booth of Bogotá's [Instituto de Visión](#). "I went on a research trip to Bogotá a few months ago, and this was one of the most interesting galleries there," he said. A video work by Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa, *A Brief History of Architecture in Guatemala* (2010-13), drew him in. "I met this artist in Italy. He makes funny, intense performances," Carrion-Murayari said. In the Guatemalan-born Ramírez-Figueroa's six-minute film, performers dress themselves in foam models of buildings from the country's history. Carrion-Murayari also admired elements from Mexican artist Pia Camil's *Pia for Sale* (2010), a performance in which she wore a red banner that she then hung out the window of the tallest structure in Mexico as a protest against the commercialization of art.

Nearby, the vibrant sculptures of another Latin American artist—Tijuana-born Milena Muzquiz—attracted Carrion-Murayari's attention. "I have a pro-ceramics bias, but now after Camille Henrot's show at the New Museum, I'm getting into flowers, too," the curator quipped.

Muzquiz's works at the booth of [Travesía Cuatro](#), a gallery with locations in Madrid and Guadalajara, combine painted vessels with live plants, as well as bouquets the artist gives away. The artist created dresses for herself and the gallery directors to wear, adorned with organic motifs repeated in her art.

Across the aisle, New Museum International Leadership Council member Sunita Choraria spied Carrion-Murayari as he snapped a photograph of a print by Rosemarie Trockel (*Study for R.W.*, 2012) at [Sprüth Magers's](#) booth. The work by Trockel, the subject of a 2012 show at the New Museum, bore the words "Robert Walser Love U Miss U," an homage to the deceased German-speaking Swiss writer. Choraria, who also went on Carrion-Murayari's trip to Bogotá, raved about the Colombian capital.

The curator didn't go far before he was stopped in his tracks by Marian Goodman's booth, featuring Giuseppe Penone's towering works. He singled out a 26-foot-long wall-mounted assemblage by the Arte Povera artist, *Respirare l'ombra* (2008), comprising laurel leaves in a grid of metallic fencing and bronze casts of a branch and rock. He saw a similar piece last week at Turin's Castello di Rivoli, in a show titled "TUTTTOVERO" organized by Francesco Bonami. The show spans the city's four major museums and features works from their collections.

Works on paper featuring images of male and female genitalia by second-wave feminist artists Judith Bernstein and Barbara T. Smith at the booth of Los Angeles's The Box drew Carrion-Murayari's interest.

So too did work by the Houston-born, Los Angeles-based artist Will Boone at [New York's Karma](#). "He thinks of moving wooden boards as a way of drawing in space," Karma director Brendan Dugan said of Boone's spare sculptures. He described the process to make *HELL*, a minimal blue-and-white painting from 2015, as layering the word's four letters on top of each other.

The last booth we visited belonged to the Parisian gallery [Kamel Mennour](#). There Carrion-Murayari appreciated new sculptures by Petrit Halilaj, a 29-year-old artist who showed in the Kosovo pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale. "He created a mound of dirt and sticks that you walked through," the curator recalled. At the fair, Halilaj shows new examples from the "Abetare" series, steel sculptures resembling oversize doodles of flowers, birds and stick figures. The two-person presentation at Mennour pairs Halilaj with Morocco-born Latifa Echakhch, who shows delicate canvases festooned with sheets of newspaper stained with dark ink.

Before we said our good-byes, Carrion-Murayari ran into Ron Rosenzweig, a New Museum trustee. Rosenzweig wore a striking multicolored shawl-like garment, similar to ones we had spotted throughout the fair, created by Pia Camil for her commissioned Frieze Project. Camil drew inspiration from the late Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica's "Parangolés"—wearable objects Oiticica called "habitable paintings." With Camil's work entering the conversation once more, Carrion-Murayari promised to visit the Mexican artist's booth at the front of the fair before dashing off to his next meeting.

