
Crystal Bridges Lines Up Emerging Artists for American Show

By RANDY KENNEDY

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After a restless cross-country search in which two curators logged more than 100,000 miles in airplanes and rental cars, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art – founded by the Walmart heiress Alice Walton – announced Tuesday that it had finalized its artist list for an ambitious fall show that will present a snapshot of unheralded 21st century American art.

To organize the exhibition, “State of the Art: Discovering American Art Now,” which will open at the museum, in Bentonville, Ark., on Sept. 13, the museum’s president, Don Bacigalupi, and an assistant curator, Chad Alligood, spent several months visiting the studios and homes of almost 1,000 artists, most of whom were not well known outside their cities or regions. The curators eventually selected 102 artists, and the show will include more than 200 paintings, photographs, sculptures, installations and performances spread through the museum’s temporary exhibition spaces and outdoor spaces and extending into the galleries of the permanent collection, which features works by American masters such as Asher B. Durand, Arthur Dove, Georgia O’Keeffe and Stuart Davis.

The artists chosen for the fall show range in age from 24 to 87; 54 are men and 48 are women. The geographic spread seems unlikely to provoke regional protests: 26 are from the West and Southwest; 27 from the Midwest; 25 from Texas and the South; and 24 from the East Coast.

The artists include Nathalie Miebach, based in Boston, whose works looks at intersections of art and science and renders meteorological events as sculpture; James Lavadour, a painter and printmaker who works on the Umatilla reservation in eastern Oregon and makes phantasmagoric landscapes; Monica Aissa Martinez, a painter in Phoenix who focuses on the inner workings of the body; and Gina Phillips, from New Orleans, whose work with fabric, thread and paint draws on imagery from Louisiana and rural Kentucky, where she was raised.

“The artists are responding to the same things we’re all responding to in our daily lives,” Mr. Alligood said. “We hope that this exhibition will inspire new ways to experience contemporary art and the evolving narratives that make up our cultural fabric.”

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