

Art Fairs

Lavar Munroe Delivers Bizarre ‘Human Zoos’ at Miami Projects

The Bahamian-born artist's odd assemblages subtly investigate stereotypes.

Cait Munro, December 4, 2015

Lavar Munroe, *Untitled (Animal no. 3)* (2015)

Image: Courtesy Nomad Gallery

If you've been to the [Art Basel in Miami](#) satellite fair [Miami Projects](#)—owned by the same company that produces popular fairs like Art on Paper, Seattle Art Fair, and Market Art + Design—it's likely you've noticed Lavar Munroe's striking multimedia assemblages on view at the [Nomad Gallery](#) booth.

Though hung on whitewashed walls, the Bahamian-born, Washington, DC-based artist's large-scale works manage to toe the line between painting and sculpture, thanks to a variety of textures and materials. Munroe's new work for the fair continues his ongoing exploration of the 19th and 20th century phenomenon of “Human Zoos”—public exhibitions of humans thought to be “primitive,” produced as a means of showcasing the superiority of the European world.



“On August 20th, 2004, I departed from my country of birth, the Bahamas, to attend tertiary level education in the United States. Upon entry into the



American school system, words such as exotic, islander and native became the norm when many Americans referred to me,” Munroe said in a press release.

Lavar Munroe, *Days and Nights in the Wilderness* (2015).

“These words were usually followed by bizarre questions regarding the way of life on the ‘islands,’ which usually pointed to ideals that referenced behaviors of the savage.

Though mostly said

out of naivety and innocence, I recently began the mammoth task of trying to figure out the origins of such stereotypes in order to question certain prejudices associated with non-Western civilizations today.”

Munroe was featured in this year's Venice Biennale as part of the exhibition “All the World's Features,” and has also shown work at the Liverpool Biennial, the Nasher Museum of Art, and the SCAD Museum of Art, as well as the first 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair in New York earlier this year. He is best known for his series “Where Heroes Lay,” which addresses the pervasive issue of urban homelessness through the use of materials removed from the sleeping quarters of homeless individuals in Washington, DC.

“My role is to inconspicuously induct the homeless person as The Hero, hence my gesture of serving him. Second, my intention is to present The Hero's soiled

bedding material as a consumer good in the art-market," Munroe writes on his website.



Lavar Munroe at NOMAD Gallery during the 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair in New York
Lavar Munroe's "Edge of the World: A Continuum of the Exotic" will be on display at the Nomad Gallery booth at Miami Project until December 6.