

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Artnet News

The #MeToo Movement Will Headline Art Basel Unlimited This Year with Andrea Bowers's Epic Account of America's Harrassment Reckoning
Eileen Kinsella
16 April 2019

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The artist's account of the first 100 men accused in the #MeToo movement will likely draw crowds to Art Basel's Unlimited section.



Andrea Bowers, *Open Secrets (Part I)* (2018) at Capitain Petzel. Production, writing, editing, graphic design, printing: Angel Alvarado, Kate Alexandrite, Ian Trout, David Burch, Miriam Katz, Ryan Beal © the artist, photo: Jens Ziehe.

If the art world had its own version of Universal Studios, surely it would look like Art Basel's massive Unlimited section, the ambitious platform for large-scale projects that are typically too massive or complex for a traditional fair booth display. It's art—on steroids.

This year, the biggest conversation piece is likely to be Andrea Bowers's installation *Open Secret* (2018), which documents the development of the international #MeToo and Time's Up movements against sexual harassment and assault. The work, which debuted last summer at Capitain Petzel gallery in

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Berlin, comprises 100 pieces of text on long strips of paper covering both sides of a 62-foot-long wall. Each strip of paper contains the name and profession of an individual accused of misconduct, followed by their apologies (or non-apologies, as the case may be), an up-to-date summary of the allegations they face, their current employment status, and the status of any legal action taken against them.

Bowers first began building a #MeToo database in February 2018; by the time her exhibition opened at Petzel that June, it had swelled to 355 entries. It has grown further since. In Basel, viewers will be able to sit in office chairs to read the text up close—as long as they can stomach the eerie reference to workplace harassment.

Curator Gianni Jetzer, who is organizing the section for his eighth and final year, called Bowers's work "a stunning artistic monument to one of the most important women's movements globally."

Bowers isn't the only artist with work in the section that addresses political and cultural upheaval. An interactive installation by Rivane Neuenschwander titled *Bataille* (2017) delves into the power of words taken from protest banners in France. Meanwhile, Alicia Framis's *Life Dress* (2018) consists of a clothing line made of airbag materials that is designed to protect women from harassment.

Other highlights include Indonesian artist Fiona Tan's *Elsewhere* (2018), a meditation on urban dystopia, and Korean artist Do-Ho Suh's life-size textile version of his former home in Seoul.

Can we expect more or less Insta-bait this time around? "There seems to be a certain Insta-fatigue these days," Jetzer told artnet News. "We know by now that the reality of the screen has little to do with the world out there."

And what does he make of his near decade-long unique curatorial stint? "Unlimited is a starfield, it is about the eccentricity of each artistic position. But even the shiniest star can become part of a larger constellation... I aimed at the Milky Way."