

VISUAL ARTS

The Chinese maze: See it to believe it

BY ANNE TSCHIDA
Special to the Miami Herald

Several of the Margulies Collection's favorite artists reappear in this year's annual curated exhibit, though represented by newly acquired works. Because Margulies is rightfully known

for top-notch artists who create some of the most fascinating work on the world stage, this is always a treat.

For instance, there are the introductory mixed-media pieces from Anselm

•TURN TO VISUAL ARTS, 3M



SONG DONG: 'Wisdom of the Poor: A Communal Courtyard' at the Margulies Collection.



AMAR KANWAR'S VIDEO: 'A Season Outside, 1998,' is at the Margulies Collection in Wynwood.

PETER HARHOLDT

Center of attention at Margulies: the Chinese maze

•VISUAL ARTS, FROM 1M

Kiefer, and the small photographs of the Icelandic countryside from Olafur Eliasson. But before more detail is given on these excellent examples of what this collection has to offer, the amazing elephant in the room must be addressed — as it is indeed elephantine in size and the unmistakable centerpiece of the exhibit.

It comes from Chinese artist Song Dong, who is for the first time being shown here, but who was one of four artists featured at the 2011 Venice Biennale and is represented by Pace Gallery, New York. It is a maze of rooms that takes over the entire center of the huge ground-floor space. Called *Wisdom of the Poor: A Communal Courtyard*, this incredible installation is based on the traditional, cramped living spaces called *hutongs* in Beijing, where the poor once lived almost shoulder-to-shoulder and shared courtyards.

The *hutongs* have mostly disappeared in the massive redevelopment of the Chinese capital, but there is nostalgia still for these undeniably threadbare living spaces that created a cozy sense of community missing from the new steel and glass metropolis.

Song has reproduced a version of these alleyways and courtyards, from which you can peer into windows and doors to see the life inside. In an ingenious incorporation, what you view inside the little homes are sculptures from the Margulies Collection, like the classic George Segal figures of men waiting in a Depression-era breadline — the poor here are still waiting. With mirrors and other apertures, you can see various perspectives of these interior lives. John DeAndrea's partially naked woman stares at you from one direction; from a

If you go

What: 'Song Dong: The Wisdom of the Poor: A Communal Courtyard' and the 2014 collection exhibit.

When: Through April 26.

Where: The Margulies Collection at the Warehouse, 591 NW 27th St., Miami; margulieswarehouse.com.

window on the other side of the home, her backside is completely bare.

Song chose six sculptors from the Margulies Collection to highlight in his courtyard world. Navigating through these tight pathways and being given such intimate access can feel heart-wrenching at times. A visit to the Wynwood space for this installation alone should be on every art lover's bucket-list.

But the sprawling former warehouse has many other gems as well. Maybe coincidentally, another Chinese artist who has made a splash all over town this season delivers another powerful punch. Ai Weiwei's *Fairytale* is a re-creation of a dormitory, where Chinese visitors were put up during a trip to see art in Germany in the early 2000s. Be sure to take in the details here, in the painted suitcases that sit in front of each bed, and the lone chair that sits behind each one, all wooden Qing dynasty chairs.

But back to the beginning. Newly added Kiefers create a dramatic dialogue with the sole sculpture from the German that sat alone in the gallery's front space last year. That piece, *Sprache Der Vogel*, made from

lead, steel and wood among other heavy materials, is powerful imagery harkening back to Germany's dark 20th century past. The works now accompanying that piece are no less troubling; the use of ashes and mud to create some of these sculptural paintings can't help but reference the Holocaust and the horrors of war.

Bleak, but not as dark, is the photographic series of huts in barren Nordic landscapes from Eliasson, best known for his huge, pioneering light, sensory and optical sculptures. These are small snippets of life that are far less fantastical but no less compelling. (In acknowledgment of just how consequential Eliasson has become as an artist and innovator, last week MIT named him the 2014 Eugene McDermott award winner, which comes with a \$100,000 grant.)

According to longtime Margulies curator Katherine Hinds, the Danish Eliasson was one of the first artists they ever collected. The relationships, she says, become personal and longstanding. The collectors get to know the entire body of an artist's work and the individuals themselves — which may be why there is such strength to the annual exhibitions here.

It has become a cliché, but the Margulies Collection truly is museum-quality, and in many cases, better.

One room is dedicated to another passion, artists from the Italian Arte Povera movement that started in the 1960s. The avant-garde aesthetic of the group intended to break down barriers between the gallery and the real world, between painting and sculpture, using nontraditional materials to create some of the first recognized installations. Two of the Arte Povera leaders — Jannis Kounellis and Michelangelo Pistoletto — are nicely represented in this mini-exhibit.

Someone who would later excel in the contemporary art form of installation is Jason Rhoades, whose massive *One Half Thousand Gallon Wall* is made up of 500 jars filled with potpourri, from 2001.

In another darkened room, videos from Leandro Erlich unspool. Again, it's hard to pigeonhole a piece like *Rain* into a single genre. In fact, the room is more of a submersive experience, as the sound of the hard rain crashing into a window is really a sound installation as much as a video.

Erlich shares the space with Masao Gozu's sculpture of another window, made from stone, iron and moss, and includes the chirping of cicadas. Out in a hall space,



TOM POWELL IMAGING INC.

MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO: 'Uomo che sale la scala a pioli (Man climbing the ladder)' at the Margulies Collection.

the permanent video installation from Erlich continues to play tricks with visitors. It looks like a real elevator, sounds like one, and when the doors open there are people in there ... but no, you can't get in.

This is a cursory look at some of the highlights here — and this just from the first floor. Videos, painting, photography and lots

more sculpture spread throughout the exhibit. While in the upper level viewing the myriad works that are cordoned off in their own little "booths," make sure to take a look back downstairs, where you can see Song Dong's elaborate Beijing courtyards from yet another perspective. These are rooms with a view that should not be missed.



NINA KATCHADOURIAN: 'Lavatory Self-Portrait in the Flemish Style #18-19' is on display.