

## GAGOSIAN

### whitewall

#### Alex Gartenfeld on Sterling Ruby's Show at ICA Miami

Katy Donoghue



*Sterling Ruby, ACTS/WS ROLLIN, 2011. Clear urethane block, dye, wood, spray paint, and formica. 60 ½ x 62 ½ x 34 in. Collection of Institute fo Contemporary Art, Miami. Gift of the Hinson Family, by exchange. Photo by Robert Wedemeyer Courtesy Sterling Ruby Studio.*

Currently on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, is “Sterling Ruby,” the first comprehensive museum survey of work by the Los Angeles–based artist. Featuring over 75 pieces from the past 20 years, the exhibition offers new ways of considering Ruby’s practice and production. Alex Gartenfeld, artistic director at the ICA Miami, discussed Ruby’s consistent exploration of the role of craft and American culture with Whitewaller.

**WHITEWALLER: What are some new insights visitors will gain from “Sterling Ruby”?**

**ALEX GARTENFELD:** First, this is the most comprehensive museum survey of Sterling’s work to date, and it provides an important opportunity to observe how productive and diverse his work is—and how deep and insistent many of his inquiries have been. I am particularly delighted that this exhibition will include early drawings, collages, and sculpture that see Sterling and his now well-known approach. In addition, the exhibition will highlight two key themes for the artist: his recourse of alternative modes of production, namely craft; and his longstanding inquiry into the American prison system and the role of institutions more generally.

**WW: Can you tell us about some of the early unseen works we’ll see?**

**AG:** This exhibition includes some of Sterling’s early drawings—like Snowball, which is like a primordial form. I am so excited we will debut his “Vortex” and “Leatherette” works, which are

incredible, idiosyncratic works of stretched canvas from over a decade ago, alongside the iconic piece *2 Stacks of Husbands*, which sees Sterling using the readymade in profound and perverse ways.

**WW: What are some of the more iconic works that will be on view?**

**AG:** We have a beautiful selection of “SP”—the famous “Spray Paintings”—that survey his work in that theme.

**WW: Also included in the show are more recent pieces. What kind of material exploration will we see in the newer works?**

**AG:** Earlier this year, Sterling unveiled a new body of work entitled “SKULLS,” which adapts grotesque special effects materials from Hollywood monster movies. It was seen as a major departure for Sterling, and a leap—and it was. Yet I am thrilled to include one of these “SKULLS” alongside other soft works in order to demonstrate his ongoing interest in exploring the American (and Western, cinematic) unconscious.

**WW: Can you tell us about the artist’s reuse of residual materials in his studio?**

**AG:** Sterling’s studio is a complex machine, and he has a sophisticated approach to how his studio can be a site for production, performance, and projection. We have included two of his “SCALE” works in the exhibition—mobiles with recycled bits of his work that suggest a fictionalized autobiography in the style of the great masters.

**WW: Outside of the ICA, what are you looking forward to seeing in Miami this December around the fairs?**

**AG:** My dear friends Don and Mera Rubell are opening the Rubell Museum—and I could not be more excited about this ambitious step. Piero Atchugarry is opening an important show for Eugenio Espinoza. And our fantastic neighbors, the de la Cruz Collection, always put on a fantastic show.