

Press Release
Art Basel Miami Beach 2025
December 5–7, 2025
VIP Preview: December 3–4, 2025
Miami Beach Convention Center
Booth N18, NOVA Section
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Debra Cartwright
Welancora Gallery



Characteristic labor scenes, 2025, oil on canvas

Welancora Gallery is pleased to announce our participation in Art Basel Miami Beach, for the fifth consecutive year, with new works by Debra Cartwright (b. 1988 Annapolis, Maryland) in the Nova section, booth N18. The fair takes place at the Miami Beach Convention Center with VIP previews on December 3 and 4, 2025. The fair opens to the public December 5-7, 2025. On December 4 at 12:00pm, Debra Cartwright will be present in the booth to discuss the works on view and their connection to her evolving body of work.

Our presentation includes a suite of new oils on canvas and small and large scale watercolors on paper. The work is an extension of Cartwright's ongoing exploration into the history of the American medical industry, with an emphasis on the history of the womb and the ways in which women have served as practitioners and subjects in the advancement of obstetrics/gynecology.

As the daughter of a gynecologist, Cartwright uses abstraction to reconcile with complex histories of Black maternal health and reproductive care. Her work draws from imagery she encountered early in life—medical journals, anatomical illustrations—and later through her own independent research. These references become material for subversion, as she abstracts, inverts, and obscures the physical form, challenging the iconography of women in medicine. Through paint and mixed media, she sculpts a new image of the Black female body with intention, offering viewers a moment of empathetic remembrance. Her oil paintings become a kind of living body themselves; using printmaking tools, she strips away, stitching and bruising to build up the foundation, merging painterly gestures with surgical process. From there her subjects are restructured, longing for wholeness. In this new body of work, Cartwright incorporates 1870s gynecological and abortion poses with imagery of the plants that were historically used to induce miscarriages. She builds and subtracts in the work to mirror the layers of discovery in her research process, allowing the physicality of her subject matter to inform her process. Reminiscent of works by Firelei Báez, the women in Cartwright's paintings navigate colonial histories in liminal landscapes.

Influenced by the gestural experimentation of Ed Clark, and atmospheric landscapes of Robert Duncanson and Grafton Tyler Brown, the visual lineages reminiscent in her work lend a sense of both historic weight and expansive, emotional terrain. She reinterprets medical misinformation, pulling from essays on the 'wandering womb'—a myth once used by male physicians to explain women's hysteria well into the 20th century. Influences such as *The Race of Hysteria* by Laura Briggs and *The History of Gynecology* by Cynthia Parker-Ohene inform her research, shedding light on shifting cultural narratives around abortion. Her work honors those who were neglected, abused, and tampered with as test subjects in the nascent phase of western gynecology, while gesturing to the present day as women continue to be habitually dismissed and objectified in western medicine. Through her process she invites the viewer to know the female body as an emotive and expansive being, reimagining them as autonomous figures, sovereign and uncommodified.

In previous bodies of work, Cartwright has investigated the relationship between Manifest Destiny and the colonization of women's bodies, and has traced themes of migration and selfhood across her maternal lineage. The series on view at Art Basel Miami Beach marks the third iteration of an ongoing exploration into the physical history of women's health and what has been lost. Her practice is cumulative, each series in conversation with the last. As she discovers more about maternal histories her artwork becomes more abstract, building a master narrative that traces women back to themselves through acts of radical remembrance. As Debra states, "I'm always experimenting, always pushing my own boundaries, and I bring what I find into the art that I want to share... this is the art I want to share."

About the Artist:

Debra Cartwright is a painter and multimedia artist based in New York. Themes around her work include re-embodiment, myth creation, theft and intimacy. She explores a critical understanding of the past while also proposing an examination of the present American healthcare system. Cartwright recently had a solo exhibition *Bodies of Water: Black Geographies and Maternal Legacies* at Welancora Gallery. She has had solo exhibitions at Welancora Gallery (2025), Frieze LA (2024) with Welancora Gallery, Montclair Art Museum (2024), and BODE Projects in Berlin (2023). Cartwright held a 2024 residency at Wassaic Project, a 2023 residency at Rutgers University, and is a 2023 Montclair Art Museum AACF Founders Fellowship recipient. She has participated in group exhibitions at Sotheby's (NY, 2023), TERN Gallery (Bahamas, 2024), Fridman Gallery (NY, 2024), New York Academy of Art (NY, 2023), Swivel Gallery (NY, 2024) and more. Her work is in the collections of Raclin Murphy Museum at Notre Dame University and the Montclair Art Museum. Cartwright received her MFA from Rutgers University Mason Gross School of the Arts and a Bachelors in Art History from University of Virginia. Cartwright currently holds a residency at Silver Arts in New York City, and lives and works in the tri-state area.