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Art Basel Miami Beach Plays It Safe in the Sun

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Jacob Lawrence's 'General Toussaint L'Ouverture' PHOTO: THE ARTIST/DC MOORE

For an art fair that focuses on the contemporary there are several rewarding surprises from the past. At DC Moore, “Bayou Fever” (1979) is a series of 21 energetic collages by Romare Bearden that tells the story of a struggle between the Conjur Woman and the Swamp Witch. Imbued with mysticism and bursting with color, these images were created as the starting point for a dance that Bearden hoped would be choreographed by Alvin Ailey but, alas, never came to be. In the same booth, 15 Jacob Lawrence silkscreens (1986-97) recount “The Life of Toussaint L’Ouverture,” leader of the Haitian Revolution. Lawrence created several series focused on black history—his “Migration Series” is the most celebrated but other projects also looked at Harriet Tubman and John Brown, for example—and these pieces are just as compelling and immediate as his best work.